



SALESIAN MISSIONARY
VOLUNTEERING

VOLUNTEERING IN THE SALESIAN MISSION

**Identity and
Orientation of
Salesian
Missionary
Volunteering**

Department for Youth Ministry
Department for the Missions
Rome 2019



SALESIAN MISSIONARY
VOLUNTEERING

ABBREVIATIONS

- EPC:** Educative and Pastoral Community
FRSYM: Frame of Reference Salesian Youth Ministry
GC: General Chapter of the Salesians of Don Bosco
MA: Missionary Animation
MB: (Memorie Biografiche) Biographical Memoirs
OPP: Overall Provincial Plan
PDMA: Provincial Delegate for Missionary Animation
PSEPP: Provincial Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan
RCMA: Regional Coordinator for Missionary Animation
SEPP: Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan
SMV: Salesian Missionary Volunteering
SYM: Salesian Youth Movement
YM: Youth Ministry
UNGA: United Nations General Assembly
UNV: United Nations Volunteers Program

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CONTENTS

PRESENTATION	10
PREFACE	14
INTRODUCTION	18

1. Incentives for further reflection on volunteering	20
2. The recipients of the document	21
3. Options and priorities	22
4. A volunteer with a clear and inclusive identity	25

I VOLUNTEERING TODAY

1. The present phenomenon of volunteering	30
2. Criticisms, risks, misunderstandings and opportunities	34
3. Volunteering and education	36
4. Volunteering and human rights	38
5. Volunteering and religion	38
6. Volunteering in the Church	39
7. Volunteering in the Congregation	41

II IDENTITY OF SALESIAN MISSIONARY VOLUNTEERING (SMV)

1. Definition of Salesian Missionary Volunteering (SMV)	48
1.1. Clarifications	48
1.2. Three words	49
2. Theological aspects of volunteering	50
2.1. The mission is born of love	50
2.2. A Church which "goes forth"	51
2.3. The missionary discipleship	51
2.4. The missionary volunteer: an experience of love	52

- a. A free love that liberates 53
- b. A love that gives itself for free 53
- c. A love that becomes service 54
- d. A love that endures 55
- 2.5. Eucharist: sacrament of love 56
- 2.6. Mary: icon of volunteering 57
- 3. Volunteering in the Salesian tradition 57**
 - 3.1. Don Bosco 57
 - 3.2. The lay and young people as protagonists in Valdocco 58
 - 3.3. A paradigmatic case: the cholera epidemic 61
 - 3.4. A vast organised charity movement 62
 - 3.5. The missionary fire seizes young people 63
 - 3.6. The proposal of Don Bosco continues 66
 - 3.7. Salesian spirituality and volunteering 69
 - a. Service 69
 - b. Communion 70
 - c. Mysticism 72



TYPES, CHARACTERISTICS AND PROFILE OF SMV

- 1. Types 76**
 - 1.1. Various realities that are called volunteering 76
 - a. Cooperation 76
 - b. Civil Service 77
 - c. Internship 77
 - d. Solidarity tourism 77
 - e. Cultural exchange 77
 - f. Volunteering 77
 - 1.2. According to the place 78
 - a. Local volunteering 78
 - b. National volunteering 78
 - c. International volunteering 78
 - 1.3. According to the duration 79
 - a. Brief 79

- b. Continued 79
- c. Intense 79
- d. Long 79
- 1.4. According to age 80
 - a. Education towards volunteering 80
 - b. Initiation to volunteering 80
 - c. Youth engagement age 80
 - d. Adulthood 80
- 1.5. According to the inclusion in the religious community 81
 - a. Within the community 81
 - b. Community of volunteers 81
 - c. External to the community 81
- 1.6. According to the form of organisation 81
 - a. Salesian Missionary Volunteering 81
 - b. Volunteering of NGOs or other institutions related to Salesians 82
 - c. Volunteering of NGOs or other non-Salesian civil or ecclesial institutions 82
 - Operative criteria and standards 83
- 2. Characteristics of SMV 83**
 - 2.1. Lay 84
 - 2.2. Youthful 84
 - 2.3. Missionary 84
 - 2.4. Salesian 84
 - 2.5. Educational 84
 - 2.6. Sociopolitical 84
 - 2.7. Community 85
- 3. Possible volunteering activities 85**
- 4. Profile of the volunteer of SMV 86**
 - 4.1. The motivations 86
 - 4.2. Personal maturity 87
 - 4.3. Christian maturity 88
 - 4.4. Professionalism 89
 - 4.5. Salesianity 89
 - Operative criteria and standards 91

IV A PROCESS IN THE YOUTH MINISTRY 92

- 1. A process, a school of life** 94
- 2. Stages of volunteering path** 95
- 3. A community that sends and that receives** 96
- 4. Formation in SMV** 98
 - 4.1. Formative criteria 98
 - 4.2. Three stages in formation 99
 - a. Formation before volunteering 99
 - b. Formation during the volunteering 104
 - c. Formation after volunteering 105
 - *Operative criteria and standards* 108
- 5. Accompaniment in SMV** 109
 - 5.1. The meaning of accompaniment 109
 - 5.2. Before 110
 - a. An accompanying environment 111
 - b. Group accompaniment 111
 - c. Personal accompaniment 111
 - 5.3. During 112
 - a. An accompanying environment 112
 - b. Group accompaniment 113
 - c. Personal accompaniment 114
 - 5.4. After 115
 - a. An accompanying environment 116
 - b. Group accompaniment 116
 - c. Personal accompaniment 117
 - *Operative criteria and standards* 118

V ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURES OF SMV 120

- 1. The Community that sends** 122
 - 1.1. The local community level 122
 - a. The Rector 123
 - b. The local missionary animator, contact person of SMV 123
 - 1.2. The Provincial level 124
 - a. The Provincial 124
 - b. The Provincial Project of SMV 125
 - c. The Provincial Delegate for Missionary Animation 125
 - *Operative criteria and standards* 128
- 2. The Community that welcomes** 128
 - 2.1. The Rector as the first local Guide 129
 - 2.2. The Provincial 129
 - 2.3. The Provincial Project of SMV 130
 - 2.4. The PDMA with his SMV team 130
 - 2.5. Profile of the community that welcomes 131
 - *Operative criteria and standards* 132
- 3. Salesian Missionary Volunteering and NGOs** 133
 - 3.1. Types of NGOs 133
 - 3.2. Opportunities of NGOs in the Salesian mission 134
 - 3.3. NGOs and the SMV 136
 - *Operative criteria and standards* 138
- 4. Some practical aspects** 138
 - 4.1. Legal aspects 138
 - 4.2. Economic and logistical aspects 139
 - *Operative criteria and standards* 142
- 5. Animation of SMV at inter-provincial and world level** 143
 - 5.1. Regional or national animation 143
 - 5.2. World level animation 143

CONCLUSION 146

PRESENTATION

We are glad to present the handbook entitled **'Volunteering in the Salesian Mission. Identity and Orientation of Salesian Missionary Volunteering'**.

This handbook is the final fruit of a journey begun in 2015, together with the Departments of Youth Ministry and Missions, which in turn derives from a previous collaboration made with the previous documents on volunteering: *Volunteering and Salesian Mission* (1995) and *Voluntary Service in the Salesian Mission* (2006-2008). This present document is the fruit of the contributions and experiences of all the regions of the Congregation, wherein meetings between Youth Ministry and Missionary Animation reflected upon the current situation, perspectives and identity of volunteers in the various provincial realities. Contributors were Salesians and lay experts from the many Provinces committed to volunteering.

The handbook is sensitive to the richness of ecclesial teaching, in particular to the Synod of Bishops on *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment* (2018), and is carried out in the light of the *Frame of Reference of Salesian Youth Ministry* (2014).

The present document is rich in its sociological, theological and Salesian reflections, offering valuable points for study and developing. Therefore, it is precious material for the formation of Salesians and lay people, which the Congregation opportunely puts in our hands when we are being asked the urgent and hopeful question of the GC 28: "What kind of Salesians for the youth of today?"



The Salesian Missionary Volunteering starts from a universal conception of volunteering based on four essential points: gratuitousness, freedom, solidarity and continuity



It is built on a universal concept of volunteering based on four essential points: **gratuitous, freely-given, supportive** and **continuous**. In this way, we want to distinguish volunteering from so many other initiatives linked to solidarity, cooperation and cultural exchange but which are not precisely volunteering.

In addition, considering the breadth of the theme of volunteering, for its enormous diversification according to the different contexts in the Congregation, we have focused on Salesian Missionary Volunteering (**SMV**). This kind of volunteering is at the same time a **horizon** in which other forms of volunteering in the Salesian mission may find inspiration and a **concrete proposal** that a number of Provinces are already carrying out or beginning to implement. SMV takes for granted, in the first place on the part of the SDBs, a clear Salesian charismatic identification and a conscious and passionate participation in the ecclesial mission of the announcement of Jesus Christ to the world today. To this, in concrete terms, is added an availability of service of at least one year.

Certainly, this option for SMV may seem exclusive of other realities, based on gradual processes of faith or because of the impossibility of a

prolonged dedication to this type of volunteering. The Salesian mission will know wisely how to offer opportunities to live the gift of self to our young people, with a variety of proposals adapted to their situation. This, in turn, does not prevent us proposing possible and more demanding paths of youthful sanctity in our pastoral work to young people who, being already with Don Bosco, aspire more. For this more concrete proposal, the document offers criteria, norms, itineraries, structures and more in order to make it operational, which, for similar volunteering proposals, may be useful. We believe that this current and fruitful proposal is capable of renewing the youth and vocational ministry with a new missionary spirit.

We ask the Provincials, the delegates of Missionary Animation, the delegates of Youth Ministry and other persons responsible for provincial voluntary work to study the document, share it and make operational its orientations and criteria according to the provincial realities.

31st January 2019, Feast of St John Bosco

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PREFACE

[1] The Rector Major and his Council, in the plan of animation and government for the *sexennium* (2014–2020), asked the Departments for Youth Ministry and Missionary Animation to review the document *Volunteering in the Salesian Mission. Handbook and Guidance Manual* of 2008, with the intention of updating the said instrument in the light of the 'Frame of Reference of Salesian Youth Ministry'. The document is the result of the process of reflection and analysis of the praxis, carried out by the Provincials responsible for volunteer service, the Provincial Delegates for Youth Ministry and the PDMA (Provincial Delegates of Missionary Animation). In this process, **the regional meetings of the Delegates for the Youth Ministry and of the Missionary Animation between 2015 and 2016** in the different areas of the Congregation (Addis Ababa, Quito, Bangalore, Seoul, Compostela, Rome) have been decisive for the elaboration of this manual. From these meetings the wealth and challenges of volunteering in the current Salesian mission in the different cultural contexts have been examined. An in-depth snapshot of the diverse experiences of volunteering in the Congregation and of their expectations was obtained.

[2] In the light of the **Synod of Bishops** on young people, faith and vocational discernment, we are challenged to offer young people the itinerary of volunteering as an encounter with Christ, who calls upon us to a full life through service.

Often the young are sensitive to the dimension of diakonia. Many are actively committed in voluntary work and they find in service

¹ ACTS OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL, 419 (September–December 2014).

the way to encounter the Lord. Dedication to the lowliest thus becomes a practice of faith, in which one discovers the love "in loss" that is at the heart of the Gospel and the foundation of the whole Christian life. The poor, the lowly, the sick, the elderly, are the suffering body of Christ: hence to place oneself at their service is a way of meeting the Lord and a privileged space for discernment of one's vocation².

The handbook of Salesian Missionary Volunteering will be developed as follows:

[3] An **introduction** that motivates the importance and opportunity of reflection on volunteering in the Salesian mission today. For the recipients of the handbook, options and priorities are indicated. A Provincial project on volunteering inserted in the process of Youth Ministry, which offers appropriate formation and accompaniment, is proposed. One point of insistence of the document is to underline the clear missionary and Salesian identity of volunteering. This proposal is contextualised in a broader framework of volunteering in the Salesian mission.

[4] The **first chapter** analyses the phenomenon of **Volunteering today**, its tendencies, its geography, its peculiarities according to cultures. An interdisciplinary approach to volunteering from different sciences shows its richness and complexity. The valid reflections and studies on volunteering carried out by the United Nations are considered, which

² SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY (3–28 October 2018). *Final Document on Youth, faith and vocational discernment*, 137.

help us to have a more universal and clearer understanding of what volunteering is in a more shared sense. In this chapter, volunteering is related to education, to human rights, to religion. Briefly, the ecclesial magisterium and that of the Salesian Congregation offer us a Christian and charismatic perspective. Finally, a sociological study carried out for the handbook with former volunteers at the service of the Salesian mission offers illuminating conclusions for our reflection.

[5] The **second chapter**: The **Identity of Salesian Missionary Volunteering** (SMV) is the key to understanding the basic options of volunteering and the handbook. After having considered a universal vision of volunteering (gratuitous, freely given, supportive, continuous), we focus, within that universe, upon the richness of our Salesian specificity. The document chooses not to treat all the variety of possible voluntary work, as well as other forms of solidarity of activities within our Salesian mission. The option focuses on SMV as a prototype and paradigm for other forms of volunteering and as a desirable goal in the YM process. This option is based on theological and Salesian reflections. Abundant considerations from the historical, theological-spiritual point of view model the identity of the SMV.

[6] The **third chapter** analyses the **typologies** of social and justice/solidarity interventions, different types of volunteering according to the place, the duration, age in relation to the inclusion in the religious community and according to its organisational form. The objective is to clarify certain terminological confusion in relation to volunteering at times confused with cooperation, civil service, cultural exchange, internships and justice/solidarity tourism. There are also various possibilities and ways of carrying out volunteering, with the SMV proposal of volunteering long-term (at least one year) and, when possible, carried out in a different context from their own. The chapter also deals with the characteristics of SMV (lay, youth, missionary, Salesian, educational, sociopolitical, community), its possible activities and the **profile** of the volunteer (motivations, **personal and Christian** maturity, **professionalism and Salesianity**).

[7] The **fourth chapter** inserts volunteering into a broader **process** of Youth Ministry. SMV is not an improvised product; it is a process that has

matured, normally within Youth Ministry, in the Salesian Youth Movement, in educational experiences of charitable service, taking gradual steps in commitment and voluntary service.

There is a long-term preparation and a more immediate one. The **community dimension** is underlined as a place of growth, of sending and receiving the volunteer. In a very broad way, a **formative and voluntary accompaniment proposal** is made in the three periods covered: **Before**, **During** and **After**. Each of these stages has its own contents, activities and dynamics. The accompaniment is insisted on its various levels: **environment, group** and **individual**. The process leads to a **Christian discernment** about the life and vocational project in the Church and society.

[8] The **fifth and last chapter** deals with the **organisation and structure of the SMV**. The protagonists of the volunteering process are clearly identified: the **community that sends**, in which the local community benefits from the Rector, the missionary animator and a representative of the local SMV. At the Province level, it refers to the role of the Provincial, the provincial project of SMV and the Provincial Delegate for Missionary Animation (PDMA). We also find the **community that welcomes** with equivalent roles. Then there is a section dealing with the relationship between the SMV and the NGOs (Salesian, Salesian-inspired or those collaborating with the Salesian mission). Some **practical aspects** are seen in the fulfilment of the volunteer service (legal, economic, logistic, insurance, documentation, accommodation). Finally, there is a discussion about the animation of SMV at an inter-provincial and world level, where synergy and cooperation in formation and exchange is explored.

The **conclusion** gives the volunteer a more transcendent orientation, seen as a journey and stimulus of **youthful sanctity**.



INTRO

INTRODUCTION



1 Incentives for further reflection on volunteering

[9] There are various elements that motivate us and challenge us to reflect and rethink volunteering in our Salesian mission.

- The **social, cultural, economic** and **religious situations** are always in constant flux: the growth of the phenomenon of globalisation in various fields and, paradoxically, the affirmation of nationalism and populism; the unprecedented and impressive phenomenon of migration, especially forced by armed conflicts, human rights violations, climate change, flight from misery and human trafficking; the growth of the arms race; the various cultural currents that defy Christian anthropology, such as the ideology of gender; the spread of various forms of secularism, being indifferent or even hostile to the religious phenomenon; the development of postmodern religious forms, with marked fragmentary subjectivism, as well as various types of fundamentalism. All these require a contextualised reflection.

[10] • **Reflections and studies on volunteering.** Among the immense literature produced in these ten years in various fields such as sociology, psychology, education, law, economics, development, theology, etc., the first global reports on the status of volunteering prepared by the United Nations (2011, 2015) stand out. In particular, a long-term **sociological study** of volunteering in the last decade that has been promoted in the Congregation and given to 427 former volunteers, offers extremely interesting conclusions.

- The **changing geography of volunteering.** Volunteering was traditionally regarded as a manifestation of the developed countries of Europe and North America, but now there is a growing awareness, examples and varied experiences of volunteering in the various continents.

[11] • The rich **Magisterium** of Saint John Paul II on volunteering, enriched by Benedict XVI and now by Pope Francis, offers us incentives for

commitment and reflection for a church that **goes forth**, as expressed in the *Evangelii Gaudium* and the Synod on Young People which has seen in volunteering a path of social commitment and experience of faith. It also offers us a patron for volunteering: St Teresa of Calcutta, giving a model of volunteering promoted by the Catholic Church.

- The **Salesian Congregation** in its previous General Chapters (GC 26 and GC 27), in continuity with GC 24, has constantly supported volunteering, especially in relation to the theme of evangelisation and missionary spirit, to which the Church and Congregation are called by their vocation.
- The **bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco** has offered us the opportunity of a greater knowledge of Don Bosco's history, pedagogy and spirituality, opening new charismatic insights in relation to youth ministry and volunteering.
- The **pastoral journeys** of the Provinces in the last ten years have been notably changed. There are places in which the voluntary proposal has significantly diminished or changed its methodology, while in others, it has grown or has maintained its vitality.

2 The recipients of this document

[12] This present document aims to offer **elements of formation** to better understand and encourage the phenomenon of volunteering in its Christian and Salesian specificity. Likewise, it offers concrete **orientations** to implement in the pastoral proposals of Salesian presences.

This handbook is addressed for all those who in one way or another are involved in the Salesian mission, as well as a contribution to local churches, to offer young people life plans that fulfil their personal and Christian vocations.

- To the **Salesians** of Don Bosco, charismatic animators of the educative and pastoral communities. They are called to know and

promote volunteering in general and the charismatic wealth of SMV in particular. In this way it will be a valuable instrument to help the discernment in sending and receiving volunteers, particularly long-term ones, as well as for their formation and accompaniment.

- To **Salesian NGOs** as co-responsible partners of volunteering within YM, being able to assume in whole or in part, or adapt in a timely manner, contents of this handbook.
- All **educators and pastoral agents** who are committed to young people, so that they present this valuable proposal to the recipients of the mission.
- To our **young people**, who question themselves in giving something more to others and to the Lord, to young people who want to intensely live their vocation of service through volunteering, building their life project.

3

Options and priorities

[13] As a result of the regional meetings of the Departments for Youth Ministry and for Missions and consultations with those involved in missionary volunteering, some options, priorities and operational orientations for our mission have emerged. These elements are not new, but they have been identified because they are considered to be priorities.

- **Volunteering fully within the process of Youth Ministry.** The fruitfulness or failure of volunteering will depend on the extent to which the experience is a mature fruit of Youth Ministry. Therefore, there is an urgent need for an organic ministry in which missionary animation walks in harmony with Youth Ministry and knows how to make valid proposals with continuity. This involves looking at volunteering as a process with a 'before', 'during' and 'after'.

[14] • **Formation and Accompaniment** are two key words in this process. A long-term formation starting from pre-adolescent mission groups to committed university students. An intense immediate formation, from the psychological, sociopolitical-cultural, theological-pastoral, Salesian point of view.

- In this process, the theme of "**gradualness**" has been emphasised. One cannot approve just any type of volunteering experience. It is necessary to respect the processes, offering progressive experiences according to the freedom of young people. This implies, particularly for long-term international volunteering, a need for a previous journey of local volunteering, to help young people to mature from a human, Christian, Salesian and professional point of view.

[15]

- A clear Salesian identity has been insisted upon. It has been decided to give priority to Salesian Missionary Volunteering. This indicates the importance of the acquaintance of the volunteers with the Salesian identity. In the countries traditionally called "of missions", where volunteers were welcomed, there has been much emphasis on the need for the witness of Christian life, the Oratorian heart and the missionary passion of the volunteers. Therefore, the life of faith of the volunteer is not just a random element but an essential part of the experience of the mission.



- In this sense, the theme of volunteering **cannot be reduced to the subjective experience of the volunteer**, which normally ends up being very enriching for the volunteer. However, it is necessary to consider the **educational** impact on the beneficiaries of our mission. This requires maturity, the testimony of faith and the professionalism of volunteers. At the same time, the Salesian mission has a repercussion on the styles, values and models of life that the volunteers are carrying.
- [16]
- Volunteering has been spoken of as a privileged form of education to faith that leads to a higher degree of Christian life, helping young people to develop a **life plan, a vocational option**. A sign of this is that some provinces have entrusted vocation animation, missionary animation and volunteering to a person with sole responsibility for its promotion. This in turn offers assured quality to the SMV proposal.
 - A **Provincial project** of missionary volunteering, with a clear directory (practical rules), persons responsible at the provincial and local level, provincial criteria for selection, training, accompaniment of volunteers, criteria for relations with other voluntary institutions and NGOs is needed. This provincial organisation has been seen as very important in creating a coherent and continuous project of volunteering. The volunteering project is an instrument for both the sending and the receiving provinces. It must be a project that fits organically in the provincial and local community.
- [17]
- The issue of **local communities and Rectors** has been highlighted. The importance of welcoming, witnessing and accompanying the volunteer by the Salesian community has been stressed. It is necessary to create a welcoming culture in our homes for the young volunteers, who are both **beneficiaries** and **collaborators** of our mission. The presence of young people in our communities demands from the Salesian community a religious life that is coherent, stable and given to young people.
 - In considering Salesian Missionary Volunteering, we focus on what is fulfilled in a Salesian community, or in relation to it, for at least a year. This document will take into account this perspective of **long-term volunteering**.



A volunteer with a clear and inclusive identity

- [18] These options and priorities could give the impression of a certain elitism in the face of the issue of Salesian volunteering. It is not so. Volunteering is an instrument, a dynamic, highly educational experience and is adaptable to any environment and to any type of target audience. It is seen in strongly secularised contexts, places with a non-Catholic or Christian majority, in contexts where young people are just emerging from marginalised situations.

Volunteering is, and continues to be, an excellent **opportunity for dialogue with the world and cultural diversity**. So that through a free, generous volunteer service, bridges of encounter, cohesion and dialogue are established.

This educational and cohesive proposal must be carried out and encouraged in every context and to any young person as a fundamental educational journey and as a way of proclaiming the doctrine of justice and human dignity that gradually prepares for the Gospel.

This complete educational-pastoral openness does not contradict a diversified proposal. Within an educational process, a volunteer respects the gradualness, the identity and the options of the diverse beneficiaries. Considering that the universe of volunteering is vast, a Salesian community will be able to find the right place, according to the opportunity, for a variety of proposals and styles of volunteering or other realities of cooperation and solidarity. Indeed, there can be several different models of volunteering existing within a province, among which there is SMV.

- [19] The proposal of **SMV is not opposed to other realities**, which are a richness for the Salesian mission, such as exclusively social volunteering, cooperation, civil service, internships, cultural exchange, recruitment

of qualified staff, professional practices, etc. In all this, it is necessary to have a clear identification of the diverse realities that coexist in the mission, knowing when to give due space and accompaniment, each according to their own nature. Each local and provincial community shall study the opportunities and models of these various contributions and ascertain to what extent they can help carry out the Salesian mission faithfully.

This attitude, typical of Don Bosco, of knowing how to involve different people and initiatives in his project for young people in view of a greater good is not inconsistent with a robust Salesian missionary voluntary service proposal to those young people who try to live a “high standard of Christian life” in generous service. It is the responsibility of Salesians to be able to spread the joy of evangelising and to propose with apostolic passion the pedagogy of holiness, of love for Jesus Christ and for the neediest of young people, according to the dream of Don Bosco.

SCHEME OF THE VARIOUS FORMS OF COLLABORATION AND SOLIDARITY.

Volunteering, as a universal value, is one of the various forms of solidarity. In the Salesian context there are also different forms of social action and solidarity. Volunteering shares universal values such as gratuitous, freely given, solidarity and continuity of service. In turn, within volunteering in the Salesian Mission, we find Salesian Missionary Volunteering, which emphasises a clear Christian-missionary and Salesian option, with a long-term commitment to service.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF SOLIDARITY AND COLLABORATION

- Civil Service
- Cultural Exchange
- Solidarity Tourism
- Internships
- Technical advice
- Volunteering
- Donations
- Offers
- Others



VOLUNTEERING TODAY



1 The present phenomenon of volunteering

[20] The awareness of the phenomenon of volunteering has seen **considerable development** in recent decades. In 2011, there were an estimated 140 million¹ people were established in some form of volunteering. This reality is the object of several studies from different interdisciplinary perspectives (sociology, education, economics, psychology, theology, politics, law, anthropology, etc.)².

[21] One aspect that has become more apparent is the **universality of volunteering** and its various expressions in the most diverse cultures. Volunteering has mostly been identified as an initiative and

¹ GALLUP WORLD POLL (GWP) *Gallup world poll* (2011); the project of comparative study on the non-profit sector JOHNS HOPKINS, Cited in the UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS PROGRAM (UNV) 2011. *State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2011. Universal Values for Global Well-being* (UNV 2011).

² Here are some representative titles of volunteering in relation to different approaches and different contexts: HIRST A., *Links between volunteering and employability* (London 2001). HUSTINX L., HANDY F., CNAAN R.A., Volunteering; in TAYLOR (Ed), *Third sector research* (Springer, New York, NY, 2010) 73–89. LARSON R.W., HANSEN D.M., MONETA G., Differing profiles of developmental experiences across types of organised youth activities, *Developmental Psychology* (2006) 42(5) 849–863. LUM T.Y., LIGHTOOT E., The effects of volunteering on the physical and mental health of older people, *Research on Aging* (2005) 27(1), 31–55. MAYNNARD S., *Volunteerism: An old concept, a new business model for scaling microfinance and technology for development solutions* (Washington, DC 2010). MCGILLVRAJ M., CLARKE M., *Understanding human well-being* (Tokyo 2006). MEJIS L.C.P.M., VAN DER VOORT J.M., Corporate volunteering: From the charity to profit-non-profit partnerships, *Australian Journal of Volunteering* (2004) 9(1) 21–32. MELVILLE I., MUSEVENZI J., *Feasibility study on a national volunteer mechanism and a youth volunteer scheme. Zimbabwe* (Bonn 2008). MUSICK M., WILSON J., *Volunteers: A social profile* (Bloomington, IN 2008). PATEL L., PEROLD H., MOHAMED S.E., CARAPINHA R., *Five country study on service and volunteering in Southern Africa. Volunteer and Service Enquiry Southern Africa* (Johannesburg 2007). Av.Vv. Volunteering, *Annual Review of Sociology* (August 2000) Vol.26: 1–723. CLARY E.G., SNYDER M., RIDGE R.D., COPELAND J., STUKAS A.A., HAUGEN J., MIENE P., Understanding and assessing the motivations of volunteers: A functional approach, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (1998) 74, 1516–1530. PLEWERS B., STUART R., *Opportunities and challenges for international volunteer co-operation. International Forum on Development Service* (Montreal 2007). POWEL S., BRATOVIC E., *The impact of long-term youth voluntary service in Europe*, AVSO, ProMente (Brussels 2006). ROCHESTER C., *Making sense of volunteering: A literature review. Volunteering England* (London 2006). SECRETARÍA DE PUEBLOS, MOVIMIENTOS SOCIALES Y PARTICIPACIÓN CIUDADANA, *El Voluntariado en el Ecuador y su Inserción en las Políticas Públicas* (Quito 2008). SHERR M.E., *Social work with volunteers* (Chicago 2008). SHYE S., The motivation to volunteer: A systematic quality of life theory, *Social Indicators Research*, (2010) 98(2) 183–200. WILSON J., *Volunteering. Annual Review of Sociology*, (2000) 26(1) 215–240. DÁVILA DE LEÓN M. C., *La incidencia diferencial de los factores psicosociales en distintos tipos de voluntariado*. Tesis de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Facultad de Psicología, Departamento de Psicología Social (Madrid 2004). DI ROSELLA S., QUISI Q., *Il volontariato. Risorsa per sé e per gli altri*, Paoline (Cinisello Balsamo, Milano 2010).

sociocultural expression of the industrialised West³. New studies extend the analysis of volunteering to most countries, evidencing the richness of this phenomenon, for example, in South-East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa⁴.

[22] Another note of this universality is found in the valorisation of expressions of solidarity in different cultures. As the *tequio* (community service) between the Mixe people of Oaxaca, Mexico, the *tatawa'a* (charitable activity) in the Arab world, *ubuntu* (the person in solidarity with others) of the African Bantu culture; the *barangay* in the Philippines, the *gotong royong* of Indonesia, the *harambé* of Kenya, the *shramadana* in India.

[23] Although the phenomenon of organised volunteering is growing in developing countries, some notes of concern may arise in countries that have traditionally been rich in this expression but where it is **beginning to decline**⁵. The causes may be diverse (demographic, economic, technological), but the most outstanding is the cultural change, in which solidarity and the sense of community belonging is giving rise to a more individualistic, competitive and anonymous cultural model, where volunteering does not appear as a social value. In short, we are faced with a process of **impoverishment of humanity**. This makes a decisive investment in volunteering as “education to humanism” even more urgent. The relationship between volunteering and religious practice is

³ Studies abound on the reality of volunteering in the USA, Canada, Australia and Europe. As an example: in 2012, some 64.5 million Americans, or 26.5% of the adult population, gave 7.9 billion hours of voluntary service with a value of US \$ 175 billion. The realities observed in the United Kingdom and Australia were similar.

⁴ For example, the World Giving Index 2016, where it is calculated, among 140 nations, the solidarity index measuring aid to strangers, monetary aid and volunteering, has given the first place to Myanmar, followed in terms of volunteering by Sri Lanka, USA, New Zealand, the Philippines and Kenya; the countries with less volunteering: China, Egypt and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

⁵ CAVADI A., *Volontariato in Crisi? Diagnosi e terapia* (Trapani 2003). According to *Volunteering and Civic Engagement in America Research*, the number of people dedicated to voluntary aid in 2005 was 28.8%, with 25.3% in 2014. HARTNETT B., MATAN R., *So Volunteerism is Declining: Now What?* Sobel & Co., LLX (2014). The same phenomenon is perceived in Australia, passing in 2010 from 36% in 2014 to 31% and in the United Kingdom the same 5% decrease is found. In Italy the 2015 report of the CSVNET (National Coordination of the Center for Services for Volunteering) points out the significant reduction of 15% of voluntary associations. The decrease in the youth presence, from 14 to 34 years old, is also worrying. The average age of the Italian volunteer is 48.1 years. This trend was already projected in 2002.

also significant, as shown by various sociological studies⁶. Although the relationship is complex, there is a clear proportionality, indicating that a decrease in religious belonging and motivation corresponds to a decrease in volunteering work.

[24] The year 2001 was a significant year as it was declared the **International Year of Volunteering** by the United Nations. The objectives pursued can be reduced to four: greater recognition, ease of action, networking and promotion of volunteering. The reflection on volunteering in governments and civil society has generated studies, awareness, political actions and various initiatives. We recall three of the final recommendations made by all governments in 2002⁷.

- If volunteering is neglected in the formulation and implementation of policies, there is a risk of discarding a **valuable resource that holds and binds communities together**.
- **There is no universal model of best practice**; they depend on different cultures and traditions.
- Support for volunteering activities **does not imply** support for the **reduction** of government work or for activities to **replace** paid employment.

[25] Ten years later in Europe, the year of European volunteering is declared, and at the world level is the **first report on the state of volunteering**. This is an in-depth study that gives many clues for reflection, clarification and action⁸. The report indicated three new clues for volunteering:

- new information technologies** have opened up new perspectives through information exchange and democratisation;
- international volunteering**, especially among students and professionals, has helped transfer knowledge;
- in recent years “corporate volunteering” in the **private sector** has also increased.

[26] Volunteering, seen as a **fundamental contribution to society**:

- it fosters **development**. Values of volunteering are of great importance in strengthening the capacity of the most vulnerable to secure livelihoods and improve their social well-being by reducing social exclusion. It represents, therefore, a way to access to **inclusion**⁹;
- it promotes civic values, **social cohesion** and conflict resolutions;
- it creates bonds of trust and a **feeling of common identity and destiny**;
- it is a highly effective and practical means of harnessing the **capacities of the population** in all societies and at all levels.

The inherent values of volunteering endow the latter with far-reaching consequences for **human development**. This new concept of development includes factors such as solidarity, social inclusion, empowerment, life satisfaction and individual and social well-being. The well-being of people is intrinsically linked to the contribution these people make to the lives of others¹⁰.

⁶ HUSTINX L., VON ESSEN J., HAERS J., MELS S., (editors), *Religion and Volunteering. Complex, contested and ambiguous relationships*. Non-profit and Civil Society Studies. International Society for Third Sector Research (Springer 2015). VAN INGEN E., DEKKER P., *Changes in Determinants of Volunteering: Participation and Time Investment between 1975 and 2005 in Netherlands, Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (2011) 40(2) 682–702.

⁷ UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (UNGA). Recommendations on support for volunteering (A/RES/56/38) (2002b). Resolution adopted by the General Assembly at the fifty-sixth session—Agenda item 108, p. 3.

⁸ UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS. *State of World's Volunteerism Report 2011. Universal Values for Global Well-being*. United Nations Volunteers (UNV 2011); in 2015, another report was made: UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS. *State of the World's Volunteerism Report. Transforming Governance* (UNV 2015). This latest report is more focused on “social activism” as an actor for a good direction. The first report is better able to give an overview of volunteering today in its diverse expressions and challenges.

⁹ UNV 2011, xxii–xxiii.

¹⁰ UNV 2011, xxiv.

2 Criticisms, risks, misunderstandings and opportunities

[27] The issue of volunteering has provoked many criticisms because it is considered “**light solidarity**”, neither attentive nor active in the structural dimension of injustice that generates poverty and inequality, falling into a form of superficial paternalistic assistance, lacking a critical vision that is able to denounce the injustices that hurt the elementary rights of the person and not generating the processes of social transformation¹¹.

[28] On the other hand, volunteering may hide other highly selfish **motivations**, in which an apparent solidarity conceals personal interests: tourism (*voluntourist*)¹², curricular, cultural enrichment and personal experience, job opportunities¹³. We must not ignore the “**business**” of humanitarian aid¹⁴ where projects are sought not so much by the needs of the beneficiaries but

¹¹ SARASOLA J.L., Solidaridad y voluntariado: una visión crítica, *Comunicar* 15(2000) 99–103. GARCÍA ROCA J., *Solidaridad y voluntariado* (Bilbao 1994). CABEZAS GONZÁLEZ M., Reflexiones críticas sobre el voluntariado, *Papeles Salmantinos de Educación* 0(2001) 12–32. ARANGUREN G.L.A., *Reinventar la solidaridad. Voluntariado y educación*, PPC (Madrid 1998). BUENO G., *Voluntariado: una mirada crítica*, Texto base para la conferencia de clausura del XIII Congreso Estatal del Voluntariado. XIII Congreso Estatal del Voluntariado La Rioja 2010 (Logroño, 02/12/2010). VERA ROJAS W.D., Pobreza y voluntariado. Análisis crítico del discurso aplicado a tres programas sociales de la ciudad de Valparaíso, *Última década* (26) CIDPA Valparaíso (Julio 2007) 147–177. BETTONI, A., CRUZ A., *Voluntariado en América del Sur: perfiles, impacto y desafíos*, Ponencia presentada en la V Conferencia Internacional de la Sociedad Internacional de Investigación del Tercer Sector (Ciudad del Cabo 2002). COLLADO RUANO J., *Educación para vivir: la metodología psicopedagógica de Paulo Freire en la fenomenología del voluntariado*. Didáctica 72; in http://www.academia.edu/1903571/Educación_para_vivir_la_metodología_psicopedagógica_de_Paulo_Freire_en_la_fenomenología_del_voluntariado (accessed 08/06/17).

¹² WESBY M., *The exploitative selfishness of volunteering abroad* (08/8/15); in Newsweek: <http://europe.newsweek.com/exploitative-selfishness-volunteering-abroad-331703?rm=eu> (access 31/01/17); COGHLAN A., NOAKES S., Towards an Understanding of the Drivers of Commercialisation in the Volunteer Tourism Sector, *Tourism Recreation Research* (2012) 37(2) 123–131. HARTMAN E., CODY MORRIS PARIS C., BLACHE-COHEN B., Fair Trade Learning: Ethical Standards for Community-Engaged International Volunteer Tourism, *Tourism and Hospitality Research* (2014)14(1–2)108–116.

¹³ REHBERG W. Altruistic Individualists: Motivations for International Volunteering among young adults in Switzerland, *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and No-profit Organisations* 16(2) (June 2005) 109–122.

¹⁴ MARCON G., *L’ambiguità degli aiuti umanitari. Indagine critica sul Terzo settore* (Milano 2002). SULBARÁN LOVERA P., *El “fracaso” de las organizaciones de ayuda humanitaria en Haití*; in <http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-37614689> (accessed 10/06/2017).

rather to make institutions survive. It is evident when government funding is finished, NGOs are also closed and volunteering ends.

[29] There are some **misconceptions** about volunteering that United Nations Volunteers¹⁵ clarifies from many concrete experiences in the world:

- a. it is said that volunteering occurs only through legally recognised, formal and structured NGOs, usually in developed countries; not so: in reality, it is also much broader in scope and occurs via many unofficial structures;
- b. volunteering takes place only in the civil society sector (third sector); volunteering has, instead, developed a lot in various contexts in public and private sectors;
- c. volunteering is the preserve of the well-off and well-educated; solidarity in even poor communities is often very high;
- d. volunteering is the domain of amateurs who are unskilled and inexperienced; professionals serving as volunteers is common;
- e. women make up the bulk of volunteering. Although women do dominate in certain areas, men dominate in other areas of voluntary work;
- f. young people do not volunteer. Quite the contrary; the involvement of young people is great, although they do not currently prefer official organisations;
- g. volunteering is a face-to-face activity. The remarkable evolution of IT (Information Technology) allows for volunteering that is not limited to direct contact actions;
- h. volunteering should be off-limits for state intervention. It is not so. However, certain policies may favour or hinder volunteering;
- i. volunteering is free. It is true that the volunteer performs his service free of charge, but it does involve costs of logistics, organisation and maintenance.

¹⁵ UNV 2011, 9–14.

3 Volunteering and education

[30] One of the most significant elements on which it has been reflected is the **educational dimension of volunteering** as a school of civic values¹⁶, character building and training for skills.

The volunteering experience is highly valued at the time of job searching due to the many social skills it supports. In fact, in a *Curriculum Vitae*, substantial importance is given to volunteering service.

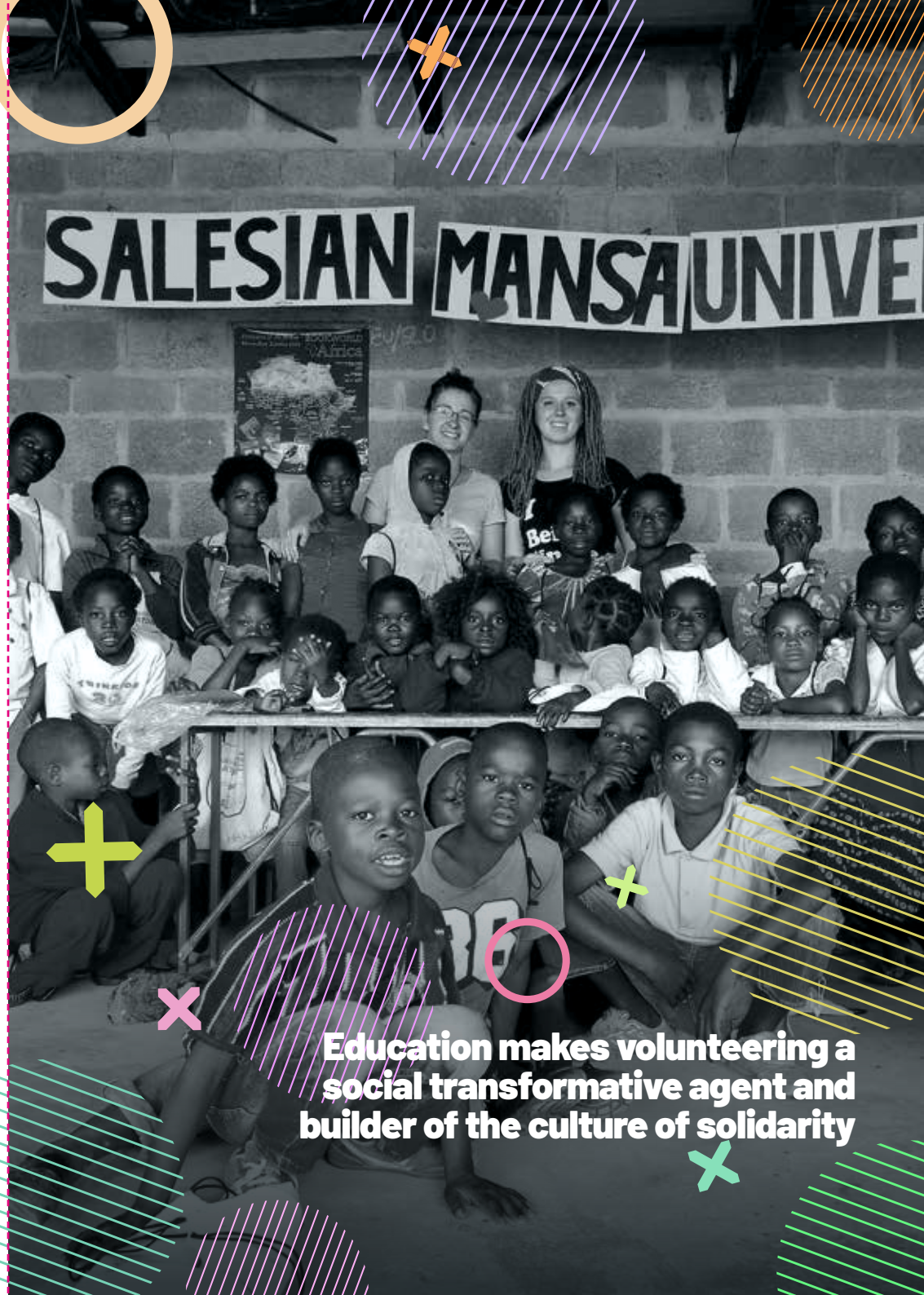
This education makes volunteering an agent of social transformation and a builder of the culture of solidarity, offering psychosocial contents, emotional intelligence, education and operational criteria that guide the integral formation of the young person. It enables one to discover his/her potential resources and empower his/her leadership skills. These educational processes are achieved through concrete experiences¹⁷.

Education for social volunteering and social complexity opens up a critical view of the functions and responsibilities shared with other agents in order to promote real social transformations. It educates to create an intervention that enhances local endogenous community development from within¹⁸. In this way, volunteering becomes an activity in favour of development education, forming awareness, building networks of commitment in the search for the causes of suffering of so many people abandoned by public bodies.

¹⁶ Cf. PROCHASKA F., *Schools of Citizenship: Charity and Civic Virtue*. Civitas (London 2002). HASKI-LEVENTHAL D., RONEL N., YORK A., BEN-DAVID B.M., Youth volunteering for youth: Who are they serving, how are they being served, *Children and Youth Services Review* (2008) 30(7) 834–846. JOHNSON M.K., BEEBE T., MORTIMER J.T., SNYDER M., Volunteering in adolescence. A process perspective, *Journal of Research on Adolescence* (1998) 8(3) 309–332. DI BELLO R., DE MARTIS A., GUIDOLIN E., *Le ragioni della solidarietà. Principi pedagogici ed esperienze di volontariato*. Gregoriana (Roma 1992). PIERI G., *Educazione, cittadinanza, volontariato. Frontiere pedagogiche*. Firenze University Press (Firenze 2013). OESTERLE S., KIRKPATRICK JOHNSON M., MORTIMER J. Volunteering during the Transition to Adulthood, *Social Forces* (2004) 82(11) 23–49.

¹⁷ SBERGA A.A., *Voluntariado jovem. Construção da identidade e educação sociopolítica* (São Paulo 2001) 28–33.

¹⁸ CRUZ LÓPEZ L., PERNAS GRADAÍLLE R., *Voluntariado y ONG's desde la mirada crítica de la educación social. Innovación Educativa*, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela 13(2003), 169–177.



Education makes volunteering a social transformative agent and builder of the culture of solidarity

4 Volunteering and human rights

[31] Volunteering, in its various expressions, is closely related to the issue of human rights, social inclusion and active citizenship¹⁹. At the Salesian level, we have reflected on the close relationship between human rights and the Preventive System. This relationship is rooted in the perspective of the integral salvation of young people. The Gospel and our charism call for a journey along the path of human rights. The Preventive System and human rights interact and enrich each other. The Preventive System offers human rights a unique and innovative educational approach to the movement for the promotion and protection of human rights. In the same way, the Declaration of Human Rights offers the Preventive System new frontiers and opportunities for social and cultural impact as an effective response to the drama of the split between education and society, school and citizenship. In this way, educational and Salesian volunteering finds a rich and current perspective in the promotion of human rights²⁰.

5 Volunteering and religion

[32] Volunteering as citizen participation is often associated with religion that carries a series of values related to solidarity, justice and self-surrender. The UN report makes a strong statement: “Studies show that religious

¹⁹ The UN report on volunteering in 2015 analyses in depth the implication of volunteering with active citizenship that, among the various activities, promotes human rights, *State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2015. Transforming Governance* (UNV 2015).

²⁰ CHÁVEZ P., Aguinaldo 2013. “Rallegratevi nel Signore; ve lo ripeto ancora, rallegratevi” (Flp 4,4) (Roma 2012). DICASTERO DELLA PASTORALE GIOVANILE DELLA CONGREGAZIONE SALESIANA, *Atti del Congresso internazionale: Sistema Preventivo e Diritti Umani* (Roma 02-06 January 2009). LASARTE M., BONARDI F., *Do Direito e... do Esquerdo. Manual de Ferramentas didácticas para professores, formadores, educadores e promotores dos direitos humanos* (VIS-Don Bosco, Luanda 2010).

people are, generally speaking, more engaged than non-religious people²¹. In fact, sociological research on religion indicates a greater propensity for volunteering of members belonging to a religious community. In particular, Christianity increases civic commitment²² and, among the various communities, the Catholic community²³ stands out. In the United States, for example, people who volunteer for religious reasons are twice as many as those who volunteer for secular ones²⁴.

There are various examples of how “churches” are significantly involved in programmes and organisation of volunteering. Volunteering gives a sense of belonging to the community. There are innumerable initiatives on the five continents linked to religious organisations, attentive to extreme poverty, health, education and rural development. The UN report cites Caritas, with 440,000 employees and 625,000 volunteers worldwide.

It should be noted that various indicators of volunteer growth and decline are related in direct proportion to the growth and decline of religious practice.

6 Volunteering in the Church

[33] Volunteering in the Catholic Church is widely disseminated and internationally recognised. It is enough to think of the presence of volunteers in the 115,352 charitable and assistance institutes (5,158

²¹ UNV 2011, 7. Cf. SAROGLOU, V, PICHON I, TROMPETTE L., VERSHUEREN M., DERNELLE R., Prosocial behaviour and religion: New evidence based on projective measures and peer ratings, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (2005) 44(3), 323–348.

²² HOI OK JEONG, How do Religions differ in their impact on Individuals' Social Capital? The Case of South Korea. *Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (2010) 39(1) 142–160. MUSICK M., JOHN W., *Volunteers A Social Profile*. University Press Indianapolis (Indiana 2008); MATSUBA, K. M., HART D, ATKINS R., Psychological and Social-Structural Influences on Commitment to Volunteering, *Journal of Research in Personality* (2007) (41) 889–907.

²³ RUITER S., DRIK DE GRAAF N., National Context, Religiosity, and Volunteering: Results from 53 Countries, *American Sociological Review* (2006) 71(2) 416–433. According to studies of religious studies of the University of Kent, more than 70% of the NGOs represented in the UN are of Christian origin, and among these the most significant are of Catholic reference; cf Thomasine F.R. United Nations too Christian, claims report. *The Guardian* (29/09/2014) in <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/01/united-nations-too-christian-report> (accessed 01/07/2017).

²⁴ WILSON J., JANOSKI T., The contribution of Religion to Volunteer Work, *Sociology of Religion* (1995) 56(2) 137–152.

hospitals, 16,523 clinics, 612 leprosarium, 15,679 nursing homes and chronic patients, 9,492 orphanages, 14,576 matrimonial offices, 3,782 social re-education centres and 37,601 social services); 12,637 nursery schools, 73,580 kindergartens, 96,283 primary schools, 46,339 secondary schools. It is also worth noting the presence of 368,520 lay missionaries²⁵. Furthermore, the presence of Catholic volunteers is not limited to Catholic institutions.

[34] The references of volunteering in the pontificate of **Saint John Paul II** are quite abundant. There are more than 200 interventions between encyclicals (as in *Centesimus Annus, Evangelium vitae*), apostolic exhortations (*Christifideles laici, Ecclesia in Europe*), speeches, homilies, messages and Angelus. The volunteer contributes to the construction of a more humane culture and finds its fullness in charity: “volunteer work is a special factor that contributes to humanisation: thanks to the many forms of solidarity and of service that they promote and make concrete, volunteer workers make society more attentive to the dignity of the person and his/her many expectations. Through their activity, volunteers come to realise that, only if one loves and gives himself to others, does the human creature reach perfect fulfillment ... Through volunteer work, the Christian becomes a witness of this divine charity; he proclaims it and makes it tangible with courageous and prophetic contributions”²⁶.

[35] **Benedict XVI** in ‘*Deus Caritas Est*’ presents volunteering as a school of life, as an alternative to the culture of death. “For young people this widespread involvement constitutes a school of life which offers them a formation in solidarity and in readiness to offer others not simply material aid but their very selves. The anti-culture of death, which finds expression for example in drug use, is thus countered by an unselfish love, which shows itself by the very willingness to “lose oneself” for others (cf. Lk 17:33 et passim) to be a culture of life”²⁷.

²⁵ AGENCY FIDES, *Agency of the Pontifical Missionary Works* (23/10/2016); in http://www.fides.org/it/news/61026-VATICANO_Le_statistiche_della_Chiesa_cattolica_2016#.WVP79IH-uUk (accessed 18/05/2017).

²⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Message on the occasion of the conclusion of the International Year of Volunteering* (Vatican 2001).

²⁷ BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 30.

[36] **Pope Francis** has offered a number of interventions in relation to volunteering. In emblematic form, he indicates to us Saint Teresa of Calcutta as patron of the volunteer: “*The volunteers, who out of love for Jesus serve the poor and the needy, do not expect any thanks or reward; rather they renounce all this because they have discovered true love ... Her mission [of Mother Teresa] to the urban and existential peripheries remains for us today an eloquent witness to God’s closeness to the poorest of the poor. Today, I pass on this emblematic figure of womanhood and of consecrated life to the whole world of volunteers: may she be your model of holiness! ... May this tireless worker of mercy help us increasingly to understand that our only criterion for action is gratuitous love, free from every ideology and all obligations, offered freely to everyone without distinction of language, culture, race or religion*”²⁸. The Synod on “Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment” offers a reading and reflections on volunteering²⁹.

7 Volunteering in the Congregation

[37] The theme of missionary volunteering began to be discussed in the Congregation in **GC 21** (147) without using the term, indicating the participation of the laity in the missionary renewal of the Congregation. **GC 22** (10), in the light of Project Africa, indicates that “youth and Salesian volunteering” should come to life. In **GC 23**, in the context of the education of young people in the faith, civil and missionary volunteers are seen as a fundamental means for their personal and Christian maturation and their social and ecclesial commitment (1, 179, 180, 252, 274).

It was **GC 24** that went deeper into the subject of volunteering, reflecting on “*the Salesians and laity, sharing the spirit and the mission*”, recognising

²⁸ FRANCIS, *Holy Mass and Canonisation of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Jubilee of the operators and volunteers of mercy*. Homily of the Holy Father Francis (Vatican 04/09/2016).

²⁹ SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 46, 54, 137.

the richness of their presence. The document makes a careful description of volunteering, of its various modalities and typologies, of its relationship with the Salesian religious community; its accompaniment, considering in particular the purpose of the service experience; its relationship to the vast Salesian Movement; of the organisation and the provincial project of volunteering (17, 20, 26, 34, 49, 84, 112, 122, 124, 126, 141, 152).

[38] After the third edition of document “**Voluntary Service in the Salesian mission. Handbook and Guidelines**” (Rome 2008)³⁰ by the Departments for Youth Ministry and the Missions, the theme was continued in the last **General Chapters**: in **GC 26** in relation to evangelisation and the ability to call vocations (26, 30, 58, 67, 68); in **GC 27** regarding the vocational maturity and the zeal for moving to the peripheries (17, 73). Finally, the terminology “Salesian Missionary Volunteering” appears in the **Frame of Reference of Salesian Youth Ministry**³¹.

The concrete reality about **volunteering in the Congregation** continues to be diverse, fruitful and growing in some regions. Social, missionary, educational, long-term and short-term volunteering continues with dynamism³².

[39] In the **joint regional meetings promoted by the Departments for Youth Ministry and Missions** held in Addis Ababa (Sept. 16–19, 2015), Quito

³⁰ The first edition is from 1995, with the collaboration also of the Salesian Family Department. Other studies and subsidies have been: DICASTERO PER LA PASTORALE GIOVANILE. *Esperienze di Volontariato Salesiano*. Dossier PG n.10. Esperienze a confronto (Rome 1995); DICASTERO PER LA PASTORALE GIOVANILE. *Formazione al Volontariato Salesiano*. PG file n. 11. Esperienze a confronto (Roma 1996); DICASTERO PER LA PASTORALE GIOVANILE. *Giovani come tutti, ma... Testimonianze di volontari*. Dossier PG n.12. Esperienze a confronto (Roma 1996); an international convention: MALIZIA G., PIERONI V., *I gruppi/ organizzazioni di volontariato salesiano nel mondo* (Roma 2001); The Salesian Missionary Day 2011 had as its theme the Salesian Missionary Missionary Service: DEPARTMENT FOR THE MISSIONS, *Volunteers to proclaim the Gospel* (Rome 2011).

³¹ *FRSYM (Frame of Reference Salesian Youth Ministry)* 157–161.

³² Without being exhaustive we quote some examples from 2017: “Salesiani per il Sociale” - “Federazione SCS CNOS” in its 80 social centers act 2,244 volunteers, in the Social Platforms of Spain there are more than 1,200. There are several Salesian organisations that send SMV for a long time: Volunteering from Ecuador sends more than 110 young people annually through the country; also: Salesian Youth Volunteers (BOL), Salesian Missionary Volunteers (ARN-ARS), Salesian Volunteers (MEM), Salesian Missionary Volunteers (ANG), Salesian Youth Volunteers (VEN); others that are external: Salesian Lay Missioners (SUE), Salesian Volunteers (SUO); Salesian Volunteering (BSP), VIS (Italia) SADBA (CEP), SAVIO (SLK), Don Bosco Volunteers (GER), Samem (BEN) Wolontariat Salezjanie (PLE), Młodzi Światu (PLS); Bova (GBR), Jóvenes y Desarrollo/ Solidaridad Don Bosco (SMX-SSM), Salesians Lay Volunteers Philippines (FIN), Salesian Lay Volunteer Organisation (FIS), Don Bosco Volunteer Group (GIA), Cagliari Project (AUL), Voluntariado Misionero Salesiano (URU), Voluntariado Juvenil Salesiano (MEG), International Volunteer Group (KOR).

(Oct. 17–20, 2015), Bangalore (Nov. 2–5, 2015), Seoul (Nov. 10–14, 2015), Compostela (Feb. 1–5, 2016) and Rome (Feb. 9–13, 2016), participants assessed and reflected upon the current situation of volunteering in the provinces. These meetings highlighted the richness of volunteering, its challenges, limitations and vitality in various contexts. Among the various aspects raised, the following stand out: the need for volunteering to be part of the processes of Youth Ministry; the need to emphasise the missionary dimension (motivation of faith); and the importance of a provincial organisation with shared criteria (volunteer project, directory, provincial and local referent, formation, accompaniment).

[40] Finally, a **sociological study**³³ of 427 former volunteers who carried out their service in the Salesian mission between 2006 and 2015, usually dedicating one year of service, offers very interesting conclusions for appreciating the reality of volunteering in the current Salesian mission. It must be considered that the survey, although not exhaustive of the Salesian world, since it is based only on the data of those who responded, is nonetheless highly representative of the reality of Salesian volunteering.

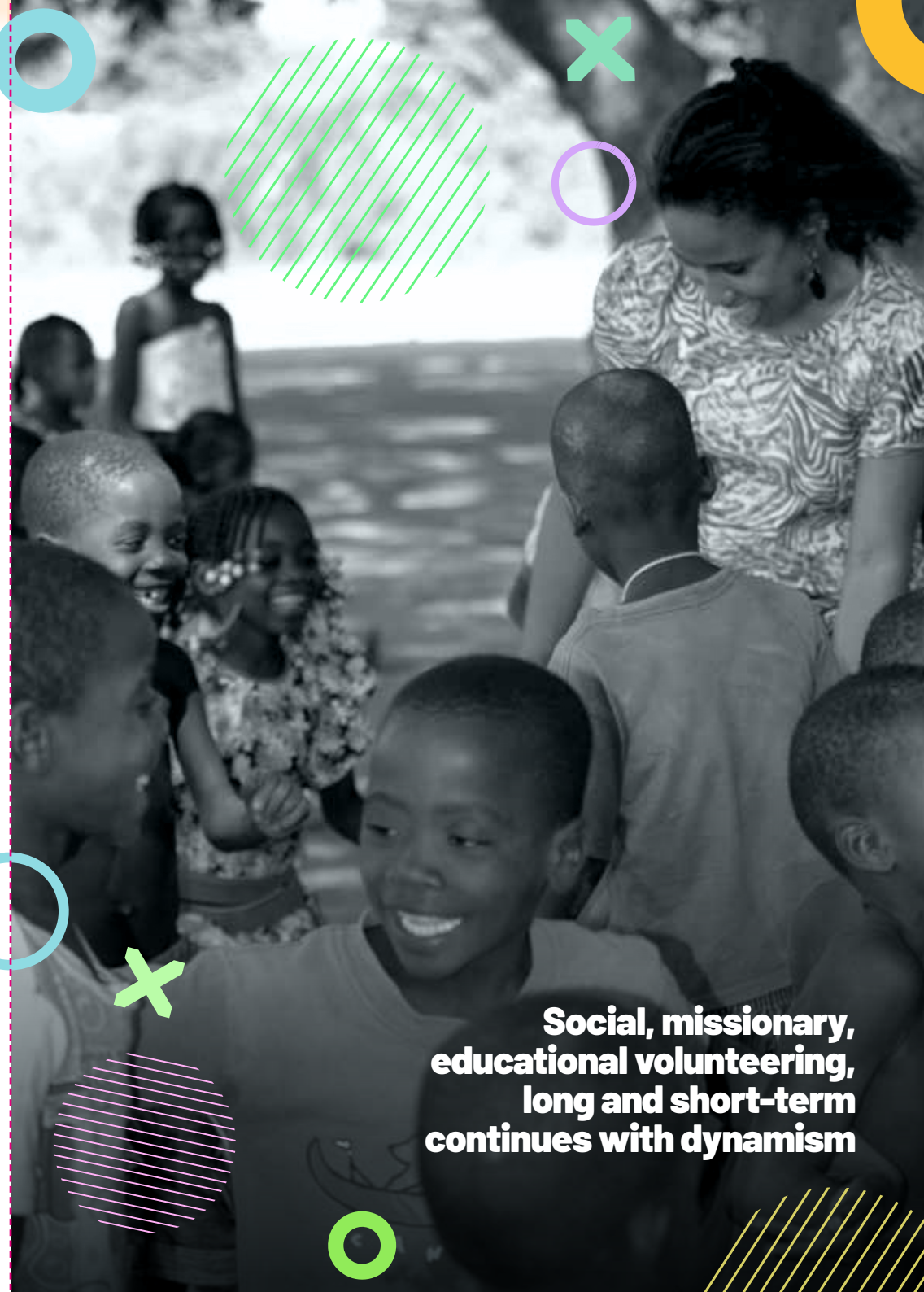
Below are some statistics for information rather than interpretation.

54.6% are female volunteers and 45.4% are male volunteers. The ages with which they did their service oscillate between 18 to 35, the larger group being between 18 and 24 years (55%). 70% completed university studies. 45% stayed in a Salesian community and 31% in a community for volunteers. The respondents were from 28 countries: 42% in Europe, 35.5% in Latin America, 20% in North America, 1% in Africa, 1% in Asia, 0.5% in Oceania. The countries that stand out the most in the study are: Ecuador (98), USA (66), Spain (51), Austria (33) and Argentina (22). The main places where they volunteered were Ecuador (112), Angola (69), Bolivia (41), Mexico (36) and India (24). 30% volunteered locally, 70% on an international level. As of June 2016, 59.5% were single, 29% married, 5.8% divorced or living together, 5.6% in religious life. The motivations for volunteering are: justice/solidarity 31.7%, religious motivation 22.2%,

³³ This first data collection was carried out by MONTENEGRO J.C., with the collaboration of the Missions Sector, in view of its doctoral thesis on a study on Salesian voluntary service (June 2016).

preparation for professional experience 20.1%, vocational call 10%, invitation made by another 10%.

The hardest moments during the experience were community life and cultural challenges. Some of the riches discovered were self-knowledge, social awareness, relationship with God and the acquisition of new skills. 93.4% feel that volunteering helped them in their current job or vocation. 92.5% affirm that they had grown spiritually (80.3% grown in their sacramental life). The most difficult moments were found to be before volunteering (12.9%), during volunteering (34.8%), after volunteering (52.2%). 89% said their expectations about volunteering were met. 84.3% were accompanied in the experience.



**Social, missionary,
educational volunteering,
long and short-term
continues with dynamism**



**IDENTITY
OF
SALESIAN
MISSIONARY
VOLUNTEERING**

1 Definition of Salesian Missionary Volunteering (SMV)

[41] It is a service of solidarity, made without cost and freely-given by a young person, sent and welcomed by a community, which is part of the educative and pastoral project of a Salesian presence or promoted by it, with a sufficient continuity of time, motivated by faith, with a missionary style and according to the pedagogy and spirituality of Don Bosco.

1.1. CLARIFICATIONS

[42] This definition is certainly open to a degree of flexibility, but without losing the richness of an identity that gives strength and clarity to the proposal. Some explanations:

- **solidarity service:** especially implies the social-cultural-economic-professional dimension of the service offered to a particular community;
- **freely:** implies that the experience is not motivated by work-related or curricular requirements, but freely and generously assumed;
- **gratis:** implies the absence of salary (foreseeing the ordinary sustenance of support like any other missionary). This differentiates it from other types, also valid, of interventions in the Salesian mission such as civil service, cooperation, technical support, etc.;
- **young:** (17–35 years). One must be at least 21 years old for the international SMV. Other criteria are civil ages or the end of secondary studies or higher studies. The presence of adults and even missionary families is not excluded, but the priority focus of the SMV is young people;

- **community:** community experience is fundamental in the mission, both with the community of origin as well as with the host community. Community insertion can take place in various ways (permanent or occasional stay in the Salesian community, or in a house for volunteers, etc.). The volunteer is integrated into the existing local and provincial educative and pastoral project or in another non-Salesian community, but sent by the latter;
- **sufficient continuity:** ordinarily, the minimum service required is one year full-time, or as the case may be, also intermittent, regular and continuous service for long periods of time;
- **faith:** implies faith as the fundamental motivation, which consists of the centrality of Jesus Christ in one's life, the reference to evangelical values, the ecclesial insertion and the evangelising dimension of service, particularly through their witness of life. It is characterised by a demanding missionary spirituality, which implies leaving one's environment to be sent to new contexts;
- **Don Bosco:** implies the knowledge of the person of Don Bosco, the Salesian Congregation, the Preventive System and the practice and experience of it as pedagogy and spirituality.

1.2 THREE WORDS

[43] In the explanation of the concepts expressed in the three words of **Salesian Missionary Volunteering**, we outline its identity. We consider four universal aspects that distinguish volunteering:

- solidarity service for the common good;
- freely given by the volunteer;
- gratuitous;
- continuous and sustainable.

Volunteering: is not to be confused with collaboration or other valid and important educational initiatives and humanitarian interventions (cooperation, contracting, civil service, alternative service to the military, technical support, curriculum requirement, internship, cultural exchange ...). Volunteering is

done **freely**, for **solidarity** and **free of charge**. It has a lay and professional character, particularly when it comes to international volunteering, which demands greater competence and preparation. **Continuity** implies, on the one hand, sufficient dedication of time, usually for a year, and on the other hand, a perpetuity of the project carried out in an institutionally organised way.

[44] Missionary: a volunteer expresses the “*joy of evangelising*”. The fundamental motivations spring from faith. He/she participates in the process of evangelisation through his/her testimony and his/her professional intervention as a way of building the Kingdom of God. For those who perform it, this service becomes a path of Christian maturity and youthful holiness. Its missionary dimension involves leaving one’s own land or community to go and serve in other places witnessing and announcing the Lord. Local volunteering is lived fully with a missionary spirit while remaining in one’s own environment.

[45] Salesian: volunteering is characterised by the affinity to the world of young people, an education guided by the Preventive System, animated by the “*da mihi animas*”, with an Oratorian heart and family spirit. It is a service linked to the Salesian religious community and embedded in an educational and pastoral community, with an educational and pastoral project. Each volunteer has Don Bosco as an inspiring model. This charismatic typology depicts our way of being a Church and contributing to society.

2 Theological aspects of volunteering

2.1. THE MISSION IS BORN OF LOVE

[46] The mission has its foundation in the origin of the Trinitarian love. For this reason “*the Church is by nature missionary*” (*Ad Gentes* 2). The Church is faithful to sending missionaries and continues the mission of Jesus “to

bring glad tidings to the poor; to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free” (Lk 4:18). Encouraged by the Holy Spirit, she is at the service of the Kingdom of God.

The mission must be attentive to the changing human reality, responding to diverse cultures, new means of communications, confronting pluralism, inculturating the Gospel and being open to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

2.2. A CHURCH WHICH “GOES FORTH”

[47] The missionary Church must be “one that goes forth”¹. The mission must be embodied and contextualised: it is important to be aware of the specific social environment so that language is adapted and becomes meaningful to people. In this sense, the Church must be attentive to the process of inculturation of the Gospel by valuing different cultures. To this multicultural environment is added the diversity of religions, with which the Church must converse so that in the various beliefs, one can assume the principles of unity, especially in social commitment and human promotion. The pilgrim Church follows the steps of her Master, being summoned to make an option for the little ones and the poor, the main recipients of their mission. The Church addresses the social and existential peripheries, seeking to respond to these challenges, being a prophetic voice and an agent of social transformation. The challenge of an “outgoing” Church passes through a true process of pastoral conversion, which leads to abandoning a simple model of pastoral care.

2.3. THE MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP

[48] Through baptism every Christian participates in the priestly, prophetic and kingly ministry of Christ. Therefore, every Christian is a missionary disciple² called to participate actively in the proclamation of the Gospel. Through

¹ FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 20–23.

² FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 120.

the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Church is more closely linked and receives a special enrichment of the Spirit in order to defend and spread faith through the word and witness of her works³. Volunteering, deeply embedded in temporal human realities, manifests the lay vocation and mission, transforming the world according to God's plan⁴.

The vocation of the missionary disciple⁵ is born of an encounter: "One does not begin to be a Christian by an ethical decision or a great idea, but by the encounter with an event, with a Person, who gives a new horizon to life and, with it, a decisive orientation"⁶. The vital experience of that encounter leads to a change, to adapting a lifestyle according to the project announced by Jesus. The joy of being a disciple, having received this Good News, leads him/her to be a missionary in the ordinary life, at the service of the Kingdom of God.

The community dimension of the disciple is fundamental. The Christian community, in this sense, must be the "salt and light" with their testimony. The teaching of Jesus the Good Shepherd leads to a life centred in love; a love that welcomes the diversity, that goes to those in need, that overcomes legalism, that feels mercy for those who repent and carry heavy burdens, that is compassionate with those who walk without direction, that becomes poor with the poor. The great hallmark of all missionary disciples and of every Christian community is to live the commandment of love.

2.4. THE MISSIONARY VOLUNTEER: AN EXPERIENCE OF LOVE

[49] Through the spectrum of Christian love, let us try to reflect on the four universal characteristics of volunteering: freedom of choice, free of charge, service and continuity.

³ VATICAN II COUNCIL *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Christifideles Laici*, 15, 32, 36.

⁵ FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 119–121.

⁶ BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 1.

a. A free love that liberates

The human being, created in the image and likeness of God, is free and responsible. In his immense goodness, God has a plan of love that is revealed little by little in Creation and in the history of salvation. In Jesus we have the full revelation of the love of God. In his life, in his words and actions, he proclaims the Kingdom. Thus, as he has freely accepted to carry out God's saving plan, doing His will, the proposal he makes is free and requires faithfulness and conversion: "I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again" (Jn 10:17–18).

The missionary volunteer is invited to embrace freely the project of love and happiness that comes from God. It is not an imposition or coercion, but a co-responsibility. The SMV is an expression of this freedom, called to announce and witness the Good News in a concrete way in life, in offering oneself to others. But before offering oneself, comes the answer: "the 'yes' to a free, responsible and supportive commitment. It is a decision that makes us free and open to the needs of others, to the demands of justice, the defence of life and care of the creation. In voluntary commitments comes the key dimension of the Christian image of God and of the human person: love of God and of the neighbour"⁷.

[50]

b. A love that gives itself for free

God creates and saves unreservedly. The rationale of God is not that of "exchange" but of pure giving. In Jesus the Good Shepherd one can recognise the merciful face of God in relation to humanity, especially to the poor and needy. The proclamation of the Kingdom and the invitation to follow requires total and radical self-giving, the free surrender of His life has produced a new life for all humankind in His Resurrection. The disciples, precisely because they experience this love, give themselves totally to the proclamation of the Gospel.

⁷ BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic journey of his holiness to Austria on the occasion of the 850th anniversary of the founding of the sanctuary of Marzell. *Meeting with the world of volunteering*, (Wiener Konzerthaus-Vienna, 09/06/2007).

“Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give” (Mt 10:8). This dimension of giving freely is fundamental in the experience of Salesian missionary volunteering, which leads the volunteer to love as God loves: gratuitous.

It is because we have received life from God free of charge, that we were freely liberated from the blind path of sin and evil, and freely the Spirit was bestowed upon us with His manifold gifts. Love is free; it is not exercised to achieve other purposes. Whoever is in a position to help can recognise that in this way he/she is also helped; it is not their merit or pride that they can help. This task is Grace. We freely transmit what we receive through our commitment and our voluntary action⁸.

[51] c. A love that becomes service

To love God means to love brothers and sisters, to welcome them and serve them. This teaching leads us to the concrete life, where the greatest testimony that can be given is service as an expression of Christian charity. The parable of the Good Samaritan fittingly expresses the sense of missionary volunteering from the perspective of the service that springs from love. *“The programme of the Christian, the plan of the Good Samaritan, the plan of Jesus, is a ‘seeing heart’. This heart sees where there is a need for love and acts in a consequent way”*⁹. The heart that “sees” the suffering reality of so many people moves the volunteer to go to the social and existential peripheries of so many brothers and sisters in need. The criterion of fidelity to the Gospel is service to the poor and the marginalised, because in them Christians are called to experience Jesus: *“Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me”* (Mt 25:40). The service is not mere philanthropy or assistance, but an operative charity. Solidarity with the poorest and most defenceless must move to the construction

⁸ BENEDICT XVI, id.. Cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, 35. JOHN PAUL II, *Holy Father’s Message for Lent 2002*: “Freely you have received; freely give” (Mt 10:8).

⁹ BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 31.

of a civilisation of love in collaboration with all the living forces of society, through ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and with unbelievers, a dialogue capable of being a prophetic testimony of love, of donation, of service and of the promotion of life.

[52] d. A love that endures

One of the characteristics of divine love from the Old Testament is the inseparable terms *hesed w’emet*—love (mercy) and fidelity. Often the theme of love is confused with a vague feeling of compassion that leads to exclusive and isolated interventions, but do not lead to engage or assume a permanent lifetime commitment. Christian service is not just a simple aid that is provided in a moment of need; it is a vocation to charity with which the disciple of Christ serves with his own life, to grow day by day in love. The love of Christ speaks of this persistence: *“He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end”* (Jn 13:1). The Pauline hymn sings: *“Love never ends”* (1 Cor 13:8). The Salesian missionary volunteer is not interested in fleeting experiences, almost manipulating the suffering of others to make only an “experience” of self-fulfilling service.

The Church lived solidarity in a continuous and “institutionalised” way: *“All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need”* (Acts 2:44–45). Volunteering should lead to life choices and attitudes of permanent solidarity towards others, particularly toward young people in need. The SMV is a pedagogy that leads to assuming consistent attitudes and life projects for social transformation and ecclesial commitment. For this reason, constancy, perseverance, responsibility in voluntary service in an organised and continuous form are the characteristics that qualify love as “faithful”.

2.5. EUCHARIST: SACRAMENT OF LOVE

[53] The Eucharist is the sacrament of love that renews the life of the Church. In the eucharistic celebration, the liturgy of life is celebrated, and it is the eucharistic food that renews faith and offers the strength to live an intensely Christian commitment in society as “honest citizens”. Participation in the eucharistic sacrament transforms life into a Eucharist, that is, into a life that is at the service, in a spirit of self-giving, as “broken bread”. In order to be full and constant, love of neighbour needs to feed on the furnace of divine charity. This is a life that is centred on the mystery of the Eucharist¹⁰. In it, each volunteer finds the energy necessary to be salt of the earth and light of the world, engaging in social transformation living a eucharistic life.

The Eucharist commits us to service and to the poor. Significantly, in their account of the Last Supper, the three synoptic Gospels recount the institution of the Eucharist, while the Gospel of John relates the narration of the “washing of the feet” as a way of bringing out its profound meaning, in which Jesus appears as the teacher of communion and of service (cf. Jn 13:1-20). For his part, the apostle Paul says that it is “unworthy” of a Christian community to partake of the Lord’s Supper amid division and indifference towards the poor¹¹ (cf. 1 Cor 11:17-22, 27-34).

Universal love is expressed in a missionary eucharistic heart: “We cannot approach the eucharistic table without being drawn into the mission which, beginning in the very heart of God, is meant to reach all people. Missionary outreach is thus an essential part of the eucharistic form of the Christian life”¹².

¹⁰ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse at FOCSIV* (14/12/2002).

¹¹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 20.

¹² BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 84.

2.6. MARY: ICON OF VOLUNTEERING

[54] In Mary we find the icon of the volunteer. Faced with God’s plan, Mary abandons herself, believes and accepts the mission. Her free and generous “yes” moves her to service, to availability, to sensitivity for the needs of others. Mary listens, decides and acts, being a model of Christian volunteering¹³. The path that Mary walks is the same path on which all volunteers are called to journey. The Virgin Mary is faithful to God having motherly and significant presence in the life of Jesus, in the sadness of the Cross, in the joy of the Resurrection and in the community of disciples. In Mary, icon of missionary volunteering, all the volunteers find a mother who welcomes, a teacher who educates and a guide that leads in the journey of life.



Volunteering in the Salesian tradition

3.1. DON BOSCO

[55] The Salesian dimension of our volunteering proposal leads us to look at Don Bosco as a model. As a teenager, he used his time and gifts to do good for his peers. He entertained, advised, promoted them culturally through stories and readings, educated them morally and evangelised them. The young John Bosco offered his time, talents and small savings to encourage his “first oratory” in Becchi, preparing entertainment with the material he had at hand¹⁴. This attitude and the various initiatives of service towards others were also present during his stay in Chieri, where he helped his companions, explaining the lessons, offering healthy entertainment and, in particular, bringing them together in a cheerful

¹³ Cf. FRANCIS, *Discourse to World Youth Day Volunteers* (Krakow 31/07/2016).

¹⁴ Cf. BOSCO G., *Memorie dell’Oratorio*, in Istituto Storico Salesiano; in *Fonti Salesiane, Don Bosco e la sua opera* (LAS-Roma 2014) 1170-1308.

society' to help them grow in a personal and Christian way. This eagerness to do good to the young became a lifelong commitment and he decided to enter the seminary to dedicate himself without limit to God and to young people¹⁵.

As a young priest, accompanied by his spiritual director, he elaborated his life project, offered himself voluntarily to serve the lost in prisons and later became father and friend of the poor young people and immigrants in Turin. Overcoming the temptation of a comfortable life, moved by faith, he made a free and generous choice in favour of the poorest among young people. He went to the peripheries to live in the insecurity and uncertainty to be close to the abandoned young people. He did not just offer them a few crumbs of time and service, but all his life: *"For you, I study; for you, I work; for you, I live, for you, I am willing to give life"*¹⁶.

3.2. THE LAY AND YOUNG AS PROTAGONISTS IN VALDOCCO

[56] His decision to do good to the young became expansive and contagious and consequently involved many people in his adventure:

He fostered participation and the sharing of responsibility by ecclesiastics and laity, men and women. They helped him to teach catechism and other classes, assist in church, lead the youngsters in prayer, prepare them for their first Communion and Confirmation, keep order in the playground where they played with the boys, and help the more needy to find employment with some honest patron. Meanwhile Don Bosco took good care of their spiritual life, with personal encounters, conferences, spiritual direction and the administration of the sacraments¹⁷.

¹⁵ Cf. Bosco G., *Memorie del Oratorio*, 1214 s.

¹⁶ RUFINO D., *Cronaca Dell'Oratorio*, Archivio Salesiano Centrale 110, ms. 5,10.

¹⁷ GC 24, 71.

This participation and leading role is evident in the Regulation of the Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales where there are several functions that are external¹⁸, to which the best Oratorians were invited to collaborate: assistants, sacristans, supervisors (animators of the Oratories), catechists, "peacemakers" (to prevent fights, etc.), singers and people in charge of recreation (animators, game organisers and supervisors). Interesting is the role of the "protectors" who, like the patronages of St Vincent de Paul¹⁹, seek to accompany the poorest, the apprentices and craftsmen to find a good patron with whom to continue to learn a respectable trade and begin to earn a living. The capacity of Don Bosco to involve so many people together for the fulfilment of good is truly impressive.

[57] Through the sodalities, Don Bosco fostered **youthful protagonism** that educated young people and committed them to voluntarily give themselves in service to others. It was an organised form of associative experience, which relied on the initiative and the abilities of the young people themselves.

In the apostolate, his greatest collaborators were the boys who had lived with him for some time and shared with him service of their neighbour in the most abandoned ones. Those most closely attached to Don Bosco carried out this service among their peers through the various Sodalities: those of the Immaculate Conception, the Blessed Sacrament, St Louis and St Joseph. Everyone followed the example of Don Bosco; he in turn pointed to St Francis de Sales, principal patron of the Oratory, as a model of apostolic dedication and loving kindness. Such examples attracted some of the youngsters even to truly heroic acts of virtue. On 18 December 1859, he started up with some of them the Society of St Francis de Sales²⁰.

¹⁸ BOSCO G., *Regolamento dell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales per gli esterni* (Torino, Tipografia Salesiana 1877); in *Fonti Salesiane*, 523–595.

¹⁹ STELLA P., *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, II (Roma 1969) 347.

²⁰ GC 24, 72.

[58] In this way, Don Bosco formed with them “Conferences” (St Vincent de Paul, St Francis de Sales), “Societies” (Mutual Help) and “Sodalities” (St Louis, Immaculate Conception, Knights of the Altar, St Joseph) in the Oratory, which began to be organised in 1847. The sodalities enjoyed a healthy autonomy, animated by the young people themselves, and each had its own characteristics and offered possibilities to acquire personal and spiritual values and commitment to life and apostolate²¹.

The Sodality of Saint Louis was, among these groups, the most deeply rooted in the social and suburban milieu of Turin, and it was in direct contact with the Society of St Vincent de Paul in its charitable mission. Both gave a striking testimony of service to the sick and the poor during the time of cholera²².

The Society of Mutual Help was created by Don Bosco for the accompaniment, assistance and employment advice for his small apprentices and workers. It was then merged with the conferences of St Vincent de Paul organised in the three Oratories of St Francis de Sales, St Louis and Guardian Angel after the cholera epidemic²³. It had as its principal function the spiritual formation of young apprentices and workers and the practice of charity.

The Conference of St Vincent grouped people of various kinds and social belonging to enhance their charitable works consisting of popular and agricultural schools, catechesis, religious and social assistance to the poor²⁴.

²¹ DA FRANCA C., *Con Don Bosco y como Don Bosco: Jóvenes asociados en Movimiento*. Encuentro Regional del Movimiento Juvenil Salesiano (Cumbayá - Ecuador, from October 21 to 23, 2010) 7; in http://www.donbosco.org.ar/recursos_detalle.php?codigo=1405 (accessed 20/06/2017).

²² STELLA, 352–353.

²³ BRAIDO P., *Don Bosco prete dei giovani nel secolo delle libertà*, I (Roma 2003) 319–320.

²⁴ Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul was the most similar to what we now call “Caritas”, or ecclesial services of social volunteering. The Conference had been instituted in Turin in 1850 by Count Carlos Cays de Caselette, who died as a Salesian, at age 69, in 1882. The Society of St Vincent had 5 Conferences, in the city when Don Bosco promoted in the Oratory a branch of the one that worked in La Consolata. In Valdocco, it also maintained its popular character and its work among mendicant families. Don Bosco was only an honorary member, since the Society of St Vincent had been, since its foundation, a specifically secular institution. Cf. DA FRANCA C., 9.

The movement of charitable and educational works and activities raised by Don Bosco in Valdocco perfectly replicated the charitable movement promoted and nourished by the Society of St Vincent, generating an army of volunteers among its collaborators and young people.

3.3. A PARADIGMATIC CASE: THE CHOLERA EPIDEMIC

[59] The cholera epidemic of 1854²⁵ is a paradigmatic case of the generosity of Don Bosco’s young people. There were few who had the courage to volunteer to heal the sick from the deadly disease. Don Bosco invited the eldest of his young people, among whom were the emerging models of the future Salesians. In response to an appeal from the civil authorities, fourteen offered themselves, and then later thirty, who devoted themselves with such zeal, self-denial and courage, that they received public admiration. On August 5, the Feast of Our Lady of Snow, Don Bosco spoke to the young people, saying: “*I want all of us to place our soul and body in the hands of Mary. If all of you live in the grace of God and do not commit any mortal sin, I assure you that none of you will be touched by cholera*”. They were days of scorching heat, weariness, danger and nauseating stench. Michael Rua (17 years old) was attacked with stones by angry people. John Baptist Francesia (16 years old) recalled: “There were many times I myself, a young man, had to encourage the elders to approach the isolated victims”. During the process of beatification of Don Bosco, John Baptist Anfossi revealed: “*I had the fortune to accompany Don Bosco on several visits to the cholera zones. I was only 14 years old, and I remember that doing my work as a nurse proved a great tranquillity, resting in the hope of being saved, a hope that Don Bosco had infused in his students*”. With the autumn rains the pestilence was over. Don Bosco’s young volunteers were not touched by cholera.

²⁵ This epidemic, especially attacked the Borgo Dora district, having infected 2,533 people, of whom 1,438 died. The parish of the Oratory, St Simon and St Judas had 53% of the deaths. Cf. BRAIDO P., *Don Bosco prete nel secolo delle libertà*, I, 263–264. Cf. MB V, 76–103.

3.4. A VAST ORGANISED CHARITY MOVEMENT

[60] As Don Bosco responds to the challenges posed by the social reality of the young people in the popular milieu, a movement of charity emerges which expands in concentric circles around the range of pastoral responses. Responding to the needs of young people demands from time to time new answers, which requires a greater number of people and organisational initiatives.

Their project is not just a welfare scheme but one that seeks to offer them an integral, substantially Christian education that will enable them to live and make them responsible for the transformations of society, for the good of the poorest people. This leads him/her to articulate a **wide variety of services and initiatives** to achieve this goal: festive Oratories, night schools, boarding schools, animation of nearby Oratories, educational and pastoral publications, youth associations, vocational training workshops, schools, parishes and missions.

[61] All this impressive movement for young people is possible thanks to the participation of so many people, especially the **Salesian cooperators** who formed “an organised group, ready to do much good.” Although Don Bosco’s insistence rests on financial aid, he shows the participation of the laity in the midst of their mission by offering their time and qualities: “The Oratory was attended by these ecclesiastics. But this was not enough: the necessity increased with the night and Sunday schools ... When, behold, several lords came also to his aid... I would like to tell you now, to the glory of the Turin ladies, how many of them, although of conspicuous and delicate families, did not show disgust to take in their hands those jackets, those trousers and arrange them with their own hands, totally ripped and perhaps never passed through water, take them themselves, I say, and wash them, mend them and give them to the poor boys.” This highlights their essential and leading role in the Salesian work: “Here, then, thanks to the help of many people, both female and

male cooperators, things could be done that each one on his or her own could never have done ... This is your work, noble cooperators²⁶.

Don Bosco promotes justice and charity and creates an awareness of social problems, as he will say in Barcelona, April 15, 1886: “The young man who grows in your streets will first beg for alms, then he will take a revolver to demand it²⁷. He was therefore a citizen concerned for the welfare of all in society, grounded from his Christian commitment. He did not intend to solve the problems individually, but instead, he responded by communicating, conveying his zeal, and organising a vast volunteer movement in his pastoral educational project, which included young people themselves as protagonists.

3.5. MISSIONARY FIRE SEIZES YOUNG PEOPLE

[62] International volunteering undoubtedly awakens in many young people enthusiasm for adventure, curiosity and generosity; in equal measure, Don Bosco instilled **enthusiasm and hope** in the hearts of the oratorians of Valdocco when he spoke and invited them to the missions:

The chronicle warns that these words (the invitation to the missions) provoked a fire in the hearts of the young, so that most wanted ardently to leave, even immediately, to the distant Missions²⁸.

A very particular atmosphere was created around the missionary expedition. “A new excitement had been launched among Salesian students and young people. Vocations were multiplied to the ecclesiastical state.

²⁶ The first conference of Don Bosco to the Salesian Cooperators of Turin, given on the afternoon of May 16, 1878 in Valdocco offers us a precious testimony of the lay protagonism in the work of Don Bosco and the expansive heart of the saint who wished to extend the good to the youth to the whole world. We quote some excerpts from the conference (cf. MB XIII, 624–630; in *Fonti Salesiane* 906–912).

²⁷ MB XVIII, 85.

²⁸ MB XI, 407.

The Salesian dimension of our volunteering proposal leads us to look at Don Bosco as a model



Significantly increased were the requests to join the Congregation. The missionary ardour had seized all²⁹. This was the case of the teenager Luigi Versiglia, who entered the Oratory with no intention of becoming a priest. But, due to his fascination with Don Bosco and having seen one of the missionary expeditions from the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, he felt the missionary call, arriving to be a Salesian bishop and protomartyr in China.

Father Orione will remember with emotion: “We only dreamed of seas to cross and souls to save ... we begged Jesus to be able grow quickly so that we could get to work soon and run to save distant brethren on distant beaches”³⁰.

[63] The Salesians who volunteered to leave³¹ and were sent on the first and successive expeditions **were very young**³². The first Salesian expedition had an average age of 26; the average age of the first FMA expedition was 20 years. Luis Lasagna, head of the expedition to Uruguay, was 26 years old. Think of other volunteers for the missions, saints whose cause of canonisation is in process: Blessed Luis Variara at age 19 was with the lepers of Agua de Dios in Colombia; Saint Calisto Caravario to the Far East at 21 years; the Servants of God Esteban Ferrando (28), Francisco Convertini (29) Constantine Vendrame (29) and Orestes Marengo (17) to India; Carlos della Torre (25) to China and Thailand; José Vandor (27) to Cuba; Carlos Crespi Croci (32) to Ecuador. A significant testimony is the Salesian voluntary missionary cooperator in Brazil, the venerable Attilio Giordani, who left as an adult with his family in Mato Grosso.

²⁹ MB XI, 147.

³⁰ ORIONE L., Appunti spirituali del 1917 (Scritti 61,13); quoted in AA.VV. *Don Orione and e il Novecento*. Atti del Convegno di Studi (Roma, 1-3/03/2002) 190-191.

³¹ Don Bosco appeals to the voluntary disposition of candidates for missions: “Those who feel inclined to go to foreign missions, must Submit a written request, in which they express their willingness to go to those lands.” (our translation) (*Circular at Salesians*, Turin, February 5, 1875), *Fonti Salesiane* 257.

³² The first expedition of the Salesians: Fr. Juan Cagliari (37), Fr. Juan Allavena (20), Fr. Valentin Cassini (24); P. José Fagnano (31) P. Domingo Tomatis (26), Juan Bautista Baccino (32), Coadjutor Bartolomé Scavini (36), Bartolomé Molinaris (21), Vicente Gioia (21), Esteban Belmonte (29). The first expedition of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians: Angela Cassulo (25), Teresa Gedda (24), Angela Vallese (23), Teresa Mazzarello (18), Angela Negris (18), Juana Borgia (17). Cf. VALENTINI E. *Profili di missionari Salesiani e Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice* (Roma 1975) 1-63. Cf. LENTI A. *Don Bosco: History and Spirit*, Vol. 6. *Expansion of the Salesian Work in the New World and Ecclesiological Confrontation at Home* (Rome 2009) 1-113.

[64] From all this we can conclude that **Don Bosco promoted volunteering as:**

- a) bearing first-hand witness** with his generous and total commitment for the poorest young people;
- b) eliciting youthful advocacy**, where young people respond freely, spontaneously and generously; being, on the one hand, close collaborators and, on the other hand, beneficiaries of its strongly educational nature;
- c) being able to summon** thousands of people in the evangelising and social project;
- d) inspiring in the young people** lively **ideals of life** that led to radical and heroic charitable options (such as the case of the cholera crisis, absolute consecration to works of charity in the Society of St Francis de Sales, overseas missions);
- e) finding their solid and deep motivation in the faith** that becomes operative in an ardent and effective charity. Religious experience is undoubtedly crucial and is the force behind its social impetus to personal development;
- f) establishing an organised way** (regulations, companies, association of cooperators ...). The charity of Don Bosco goes beyond a feeling of compassion exercised immediately. It becomes an associated and continuous force to transform the society of its time;
- g) preparing good Christians and honest citizens** for society, who with their civic actions contribute to the common good.

3.6. THE PROPOSAL OF DON BOSCO CONTINUES

[65] Throughout the 150 years of Salesian history we have seen a continuous development of the associations and various forms of voluntary service on the part of young people.

Among the many forms of Salesian youth volunteering, the missionary opens up the social dimension of charity to a spirituality of responsible

service, to a stable trust in young people capable of launching them towards the world of those who ask for solidarity and help, to combination with groups that strengthen the formative path, to organic contact with those who already live a dignified experience of volunteering. With these fundamental attitudes the formation path of each type of volunteering begins, which is successively developed with specific formative itineraries, enriched by the activity of the young people involved.

Since the 1960s we have witnessed a continuous development of experiences of young lay missionaries in our environments in various forms. This is how missionary volunteering arises: from the experiences of volunteer missionary groups to NGOs.

[66] From the 1980s we can distinguish some phases that contributed to the qualitative growth of missionary volunteering:

- passage from an isolated initiative to its integration within the Youth Ministry proposal of the Province;
- involvement of former volunteers in the formation of the young, until the progressive assumption of responsibility;
- the progressive pastoral actions of volunteers at the local level;
- growth of relations between the Provinces that send volunteers and the Provinces that accept young missionary volunteers;
- the close link, in some provinces, between volunteering and vocation ministry;
- increase in the number of vocations in groups of the Salesian family from volunteers on all continents thanks to an explicit and guided vocational accompaniment;
- improvement in the quality of the preparation of young volunteers;
- increase in the number of volunteers who come from our educational and pastoral environments;
- expansion of the opening of the receiving communities, which recognises the wealth derived from the presence of volunteers, their lives and their mission;

- increase in the number of volunteers who, having returned from their missionary experiences, commit themselves “at home”. In fact, some structures of the European Provinces emerged with the support of the former volunteers returned from experiences lived abroad;
- growth of missionary cooperation and lay missionary volunteering. There is ample space for long-term volunteering. Many lay people go on a mission with the whole family. Fascinated by the missionary charism of Don Bosco, they offer the competence of their profession and the testimony of their charity with the work of the missionaries.

[67] Salesian missionary volunteering proposed to young people shows the values of the Gospel with the witness of selfless service and solidarity in education and in the sociopolitical commitment that reaches the realities of family, work and culture. From today’s experience emerges an SMV that, through the young people, embraces great areas of intervention: culture, social assistance, free time, cooperative development, group animation, education to the faith, formation of catechists and pastoral agents.

We, the children of Don Bosco, offer our contribution to the missionary Church, which goes out to the geographical, cultural and existential peripheries to promote a culture of commitment and solidarity that helps to overcome indifference and individualism. We are determined to invest in an evangelisation that knows how to intervene in the needs of humanity, especially the poorest, and a great educational work to promote the formation of a new mentality and new lifestyles. True ethical and cultural revolutions can be acted upon by people who live by cultivating a reason enlightened by love, by that perception of the world and of ourselves that only the heart can offer. To convert the mind and transform social structures the Gospel, the Word of God addressed to man for his salvation is sufficient. Changing the world is at hand. Just change the world around us, caring for the hungry, the exploited and the sick. The young

volunteers of today, within the Salesian family, are called to continue the dream of Don Bosco: to be missionaries of the young, to care for the poor, to bring to them the joyful message of salvation, to make them experience the closeness of God and the sweetness of His love³³.

3.7. SALESIAN SPIRITUALITY AND VOLUNTEERING

[68] The GC 24 indicated some fundamental lines of spirituality to be shared with the laity³⁴:

- preferential love for young people, especially the poorest: **the pastoral charity**;
- the spirituality of the relationship: The family spirit;
- commitment in the Church for the world;
- spirituality of daily life and work;
- the Preventive System: in permanent listening to God and the human person.

[69] The experience of volunteering suggests three elements that always appear in their spiritual adventure: **service, communion and mysticism**.

[70] a. Service

It is the joy that produces a demanding mission and commitment. This intense activity gives birth to a generous heart. It is that apostolic passion of pastoral charity that leads to love with

³³ CHÁVEZ P. *Omelia nella celebrazione eucaristica della spedizione missionaria n. 144* (Valdocco, 29.09.2013), In http://www.volint.it/vis/files/RM_OmeliaSpedizioneMissionaria_29sett13.pdf (accessed 20/06/2017).

³⁴ Cf. GC 24, 89–100. Also, the FRSYM, speaking of the spirituality of the SMV, offers in a concentrated way some determining elements: “the apostolic interiority, characterised by the spirit of the “*da mihi animas*”; the centrality of Christ, Good Shepherd, who demands from the missionary volunteer a pastoral pedagogical attitude in the relationship of his recipients; the educational commitment; the work done with joy; the Marian dimension that situates missionary action and volunteering as participation of the ecclesial motherhood of Mary Help of Christians”, 160.

generosity, without setting limits and fears. It is the charity that becomes fantasy of love, full of creativity and initiatives, flexible in its ability to carry out its mission. In Salesian vocabulary we can translate it as the “**oratorian heart**” (generous, open, sympathetic, creative, sensitive, personalised ...): sanctified work. It is the “**da mihi animas caetera tolle.**” The mystic of the first part: the enthusiastic zeal for self-giving (*da mihi animas*), demands the corresponding generous renunciation of the second (*caetera tolle*).

[71] b. Communion

An intense element in the experience of volunteering is the strong experience of communion with the beneficiaries of the mission, who are not mere numbers but names of people with whom the volunteer is connected in a rich exchange of humanity and affection; communion is with a new reality and a new culture; the festive communion with a Christian community that dreams, fulfils and celebrates; the paternal and experienced communion with the religious community that gives balance, serenity and helps to internalise the experience; the enriching community of volunteers who share experience, mission and life. All this can be expressed in the Salesian way—the **family spirit**, which is not



The service. It is the joy that a demanding mission and service produces. An intense activity ferments a generous heart

just platitudinous, but is the sensitive expression of God-family, of the Church-family.

[72] c. **Mysticism**

There is an **impact with the reality that transforms**. It implies the discovery of oneself, of one's own limits, of one's own potentials, miseries and riches; the discovery of reality, sometimes harsh and raw, in the face of poverty and injustice; the discovery of great things in small ones, of the essential ones in what seemed trivial; the discovery of the joy lived in the community with simplicity; the discovery of God in all this and in a personal relationship. We can call all this the development of the capacity to be contemplative in action³⁵ or, better, **contemplation with open eyes**.

It is the Samaritan contemplation that helps us to "see" the wounded man on the road. This mysticism means that volunteering is not a passing sentimentality, but an event of love that is nourished, that takes root, that finds deep and stable reasons for the love of Christ. It is a love already experienced in the very gift of service, in communion with others, but that requires to be 'face-to-face' with the source of love.

It is a love that is matured in the silence of the intimacy of the encounter, in filial prayer, in listening to the Word, in the Sacraments. In the Salesian spirituality, Don Bosco offers us the **image of two columns** in which the experience of volunteering is invited to be secured: in the Eucharist—that encounter with **Christ** who gives himself freely and with freedom "*when he was betrayed and entered into his passion, voluntarily accepted³⁶, he took bread...*"; and which establishes the eternal covenant, the expression of a stable and permanent love—"*this is the cup of my Blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant that shall be poured out for*

³⁵ CHÁVEZ P. *Wake up the world and enlighten the future. Retreat talks* (Bengaluru 2016) 81–92. It offers a rich presentation of contemplation in Salesian action: It is a prayer that perceives and lives the saving events, finding its value in what others consider banal; the real prayer that is the life that develops according to the will of the Father at the service of humanity; it is the habitual disposition of the soul that performs the Will of God with ease, perseverance and great joy; it is the awareness of being instruments of God's action at the service of young people, celebrating the liturgy of life.

³⁶ In the eucharistic prayer II, the Latin text indicates that the attitude of Jesus is "*Qui cum passioni voluntarie traderetur*"; many languages translate it as "voluntarily", other translations as "freely".

you." In this way the young person is led to willingly become a food for others and to be bestowed (poured) with a responsible commitment. The other column, **Mary**, is a model of the virtues of the volunteer, icon of the motherhood of the Church and of the community that welcomes the volunteer³⁷.

³⁷ Cf. Part II 2.5–6.

TYPES, CHARACTERISTICS AND PROFILE OF SMV



1 Types

[73] In our Congregation, there is an intense and broad youth commitment, which reveals new sensibilities and perspectives. This new youth involvement in the Salesian mission is born, developed and strengthened in the educational and pastoral communities that motivate young people to be missionaries of other young people.

Provinces are committed to the formation of young people in various areas: Oratories, youth centres, parishes, catechesis, schools and social situations to promote a vocational culture and robust experience of volunteering.

When we talk about the typology of volunteering, we can see various expressions of what is called "*volunteering in the Salesian mission*". One of them is the **Salesian Missionary Volunteering**, on which this document is focused. However, it is important to describe different concepts that are sometimes related to volunteering in order to better focus on SMV.

1.1. VARIOUS REALITIES THAT ARE CALLED VOLUNTEERING

[74] There are several terminologies that, if not clarified, can create confusion and distort the various proposals. Each of these realities has its identity, purpose and demands. Sometimes, all these different realities are inaccurately referred to as volunteering. Each has its value and its objective, which may well find a place in the Salesian mission; but it is important to distinguish all these realities and forms of "volunteering" or solidarity action to better understand and respect their identities and know how to integrate them into the mission.

a. **Cooperation** offers professional competence in some field of humanitarian development. Generally, cooperation carries

out its activity outside its country of residence. Its great contribution is the professionalism that can contribute to qualify a type of international volunteering.

- b. **Civil Service** is the service that citizens of a State can provide in favour of public or private entities. They can be carried out freely, or be alternative to particular normative obligations, such as replacing compulsory military service. The State assumes all the economic expenses of the citizen in service (transport, maintenance and compensation). It can be an opportune instrument to facilitate the economic support of volunteering.
- c. **Internship** is the professional practice performed by a student to put their knowledge and skills into practice. The trainee is an apprentice who carries out this practice with the intention of obtaining field experience, while the person in charge of guiding him/her is usually known as a tutor or mentor. After completing the curricular requirement, some of interns choose to continue their activities in the form of voluntary service in various social settings.
- d. **Solidarity tourism** refers to a person or group that participates in a specific way during their holidays as a way of getting to know another culture or a humanitarian project, and become more aware of the situation of developing countries. This can be a good educational opportunity to prepare for future volunteering.
- e. **Cultural Exchange** involves a student abroad to learn about the customs, traditions and language of another nation. In our case it can be hosted in a Salesian institution while offering some voluntary service, alternating it with other cultural activities.
- f. **Volunteering** is the activity in which time and skills are dedicated to work and serving a community or a group of

people, in an organised way, by one's own free decision, free and without economic remuneration, with the aim of contributing to the improvement of their living conditions.

However, we will refer to "volunteering" only. Within this reality, without wishing to be exhaustive, there is a universe of modalities, forms, criteria, times, places, profiles, types of activities.

1.2. ACCORDING TO THE PLACE

- [75] a. **Local volunteering** develops in the environment in which the volunteer lives and works; they are usually the animators of the various educational-pastoral activities of the work. The majority of young people find at the local level a space for commitment and self-giving, sometimes serving full-time and for a prolonged period of time, including integrating themselves in the local educative and pastoral or even religious community. Even though this kind of volunteering does not require leaving his/her own community to go elsewhere, it still complies with the requirements of true Salesian Missionary Volunteering.
- b. **National volunteering** originated from the home nation and from Salesian works presented by other institutions or by private initiatives. Internal national volunteers carry out a kind of missionary and vocational volunteering, with their respective demands, leaving their own community to serve another one. This local volunteering is developed both in the field of educational and social action as well as in the fields of evangelising and missionary.
- [76] c. **International Volunteering** is when volunteers are sent or received from different countries. Some are sent directly by the Provincial Youth Ministry from one Province to another. Others come from Salesian cooperation organisations or from other institutions. In general, this service is governed by contracts and agreements with the organisations of origin. This kind of volunteering is

characterised by professional competencies and sufficient personal maturity enriched by genuine motivations. Typically, they are long-term experiences, not less than a year.

1.3. ACCORDING TO DURATION

- [77] a. **Brief** services are rather specific and occasional, as an expression of direct responses to solidarity (emergencies) or educational (specific actions of young people of some institution). Being valid interventions, they still do not enter into the vision of volunteering that offers continuity in service.
- b. **Continued** cases are where professionals or students, or people with family responsibilities who, due to their commitments, dedicate some weekly hours to the local volunteer service. They are valid interventions motivated by options and permanent values of life. These are interventions that offer continuity to a project.
- c. **Intense** are the so-called "missionary weeks" or "summer missions" or "volunteer experiences". This type of experience, in addition to doing some good in the communities they host, have a strong impact on the lives of the young people who perform them. This type of volunteering is loaded with an enormous educational and motivational force that prepares adolescents and young people for more consistent interventions in the future, as well as for their life project.
- d. **Long** volunteer experiences range from 1 to 2 years. In these proposals, the volunteer gains the experience of inclusion in a community or new culture, in which continuity of service can be developed and maintained.

1.4. ACCORDING TO AGE

- [78]
- a. **Education towards volunteering.** This starts from childhood into adolescence, and is a process with formative itineraries and short and specific experiences that help to mature attitudes and values of volunteering. At this point, programmes of “Education to Development” and “Education to Global Citizenship” are developed, offering a critical reading of the socioeconomic reality at the world level, including elements of transformational action of the children and young people.
 - b. **Initiation to volunteering.** This normally involves the experiences offered at the end of high school (17-20 years old) in our Oratories, youth centres or social settings and missions. These experiences of volunteering, both long-term and short-term, really help young people to develop their individual life project. It is volunteering with a strong vocational profile. This type of experience must be carried out at local or national level, discouraging international volunteering for this period.
 - c. **Youth engagement age.** Volunteer services are performed by young people (aged 21-35) who already have professional skills, allowing their intervention to be more mature and incisive from a professional point of view. The volunteer proposal has proved to be a very effective means of pastoral work with adult youth, particularly in university ministry. This is an ideal period for international volunteering.
 - d. **Adulthood.** While adults are not the priority recipients of our mission, they are our close collaborators. Volunteering in adulthood tends to be continuous and also international. Adults can offer rich personal experience and professionalism (think of retired people with great potential for the mission).

1.5. ACCORDING TO THE INCLUSION IN THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

- [79]
- a. **Within the community.** Volunteers live in the religious community or in the different sectors that are under the responsibility of the community. They are fully integrated into the life and activities of the Salesian community (planning, fraternity, prayer). Volunteers integrated to the community fulfil an intense experience of life and work. The methods may vary according to the profile of the volunteers. This integration facilitates their complete inclusion in the Educative and Pastoral Community (EPC).
 - b. **Community of volunteers.** They live with the same intensity as in the mission, but they are housed in structures intended for volunteers, who, according to their circumstances, will encounter community experience with a greater or less intensity. The relationship with the religious community and participation in their activities and life can vary according to the contexts and the profile of the volunteers.
 - c. **External to the community.** They live outside the religious community. They spend part of their time collaborating on specific activities as the case may be. As far as their work is concerned, they have the same requirements as the volunteer who is integrated into the community.

1.6. ACCORDING TO THE FORM OF ORGANISATION

- [80]
- a. **Salesian Missionary Volunteering.** Volunteering is coordinated through the local and Provincial Salesian Youth Ministry with a robust project inserted in the Provincial SEPP. Volunteers are referred to the SMV, sent from a house or by a Province for another Salesian presence, following the rules and criteria of the

Provincial Volunteer Project. This is the option and priority of the Congregation.

b. Volunteering of NGOs or other institutions related to Salesians.

Volunteering is coordinated through recognised civil organisations offering volunteering (NGO or similar) and incorporated to a greater or lesser extent, according to the contexts, in the Salesian Educative and Pastoral Project of a Province. This type of volunteer can be referred to the SMV to the extent that it is identified with the Provincial Salesian Missionary Volunteer Project of the original province.

c. Volunteering of NGOs or other non-Salesian civil or ecclesial institutions.

There are various organisations (NGOs) or ecclesial institutions (dioceses, movements), which according to their characteristics and identity, send volunteers to Salesian presences. The agreements are made directly between the Salesian Province and each individual institution.

[81]

OPERATIVE CRITERIA AND STANDARDS

- “**Volunteering**” should not be confused with other valid forms of social promotion or cultural exchange.
- The SMV is born of **motivations of faith in Jesus Christ**, enriched by the Salesian charismatic characteristics.
- The SMV is carried out locally, **nationally and internationally**.
- The expected time for the SMV is **1 to 2 years**.
- The age of SMV ranges from **17 to 35 years**. The international SMV starts from the **age of 21**.
- The form of **integration** of the SMV into the Salesian community can be as internal or community volunteers, or as external to the community.
- The Salesian community, while maintaining the spirit of welcome, **maintains places and moments** proper to the religious community.
- The sending **and receiving** of volunteers is the responsibility of the Provincial Community, represented by the Provincial, who can be instrumentally assisted by various types of organisations.

2

Characteristics of SMV

[82]

The Salesian missionary volunteering proposes the values of the Gospel with the witness of selfless service and solidarity in education and in the sociopolitical commitment that reaches the realities of family, work and culture¹.

¹ FRSYM, 160.

The most outstanding characteristics of SMV that can be shared by all types of volunteers in the Salesian mission are listed below².

1. **Lay.** Participating in the Salesian project, joining their lay identity with the religious one in an educational, social and missionary movement. The volunteer is an agent of transformation of society according to the values of the Kingdom, with a professionalism that brings richness for the mission.
2. **Youthful.** The service is performed with youthful spirit, in tune with those being served, demonstrating sensitivity to their world and problems. It does not exclude adults who accept the characteristics of volunteering.
3. **Missionary.** The volunteer proposes the values of the Gospel, offers testimony and is inspired by the Gospel. Motivated by a vision of faith, he/she brings their testimony and the Word of God out of their own environment. It involves being sensitive and sympathetic with the world of poverty and youth marginalisation, where the "little ones" are the presence of Christ.
4. **Salesian.** With Don Bosco as a model, the volunteer lives the Salesian Youth Spirituality and uses the Preventive System as a framework and pedagogy in action; the Oratorian criterion is his/her way of being present among the recipients, animated by the spirit of "*da mihi animas*".
5. **Educational.** The volunteer is preferably incorporated into human development programmes and acts according to the Preventive System. He/she is primarily concerned with personal and social maturity by accepting the challenge of "educating by being educated".
6. **Sociopolitical.** The volunteer is actively involved in the sociocultural, economic and political life, and undertakes to transform it in

² These characteristics are already proposed, with small changes, in the documents of 1995 and 2008.

collaboration with civil and ecclesial institutions. He/she knows how to make a deep and critical reading of reality.

7. **Community.** The volunteer lives in a religious community with the Salesians and/or other volunteers, and is part of an educational community, sharing the educative and pastoral project. This allows one to be involved in group experiences, which help to develop the values of dialogue and self-giving. He/she is also sensitive to interculturality, knowing how to build bridges with the various people encountered in their mission.

3 Possible volunteering activities

[83] The services that volunteering can offer to the Salesian mission are many in the fields of education, vocational training, evangelisation and social promotion. For example:

- education, especially attentive to teacher training;
- psychological care, especially with vulnerable children and adolescents;
- leisure education, sport, music, arts, languages;
- various specialities in technical and vocational training;
- civil construction, architecture, engineering;
- administration and logistics;
- agriculture, breeding, beekeeping, fish farming, water, sanitation;
- training on human rights and social activism;
- Information Technology;
- social communication and editing of texts, web pages;
- health (medicine, nursing, preventive medicine);
- pastoral such as catechesis, youth groups and plans, family ministry.

4 Profile of the Salesian Missionary Volunteer

[84] The profile defined for the volunteer is a horizon towards which one may walk with patience, respecting processes and times, having a realistic sense of the actual situation of young candidates. This does not prevent us from making a demanding volunteering proposal; on the contrary, it rather proposes challenging paths and goals for a life project.

On the other hand, placing ourselves in the position of the recipients of our mission, they have the right to be offered collaborators, educators, friends, models of people rich in humanity, competencies and, in particular, credible witnesses of the Lord. Although volunteering is a great gift for those who perform it, we cannot limit it to their personal and subjective experience. Its validity and opportunity must be evaluated in relation to the recipients of our mission with whom they interact.

4.1. THE MOTIVATIONS

[85] The theme of motivations has been extensively studied in volunteering. Certainly, as with any choice, there are no unambiguous motivations, since they are complex, conscious and less conscious, explicit and implicit. What is important is that the prevailing conscious motivations are the most consistent to the mission to which they are called to perform. The fulfilment of volunteering leads to a purification of motivations.

From the question "Who am I?" the following motivations that reach the depths of the person arose:

- to serve others freely;
- create bridges between people and cultures through solidarity;
- to give to those who have less with what God has given me;
- entering into communion with the giving and receiving people;

- discovering one's life plan by serving others;
- love Christ in one's neighbour.

The dominant motivation that should guide a SMV is none other than **"loving Jesus in others"** and **"loving as Jesus loved."** This fundamental attitude will take shape in various forms of social action: commitment to justice, solidarity, equality, human rights, the integral promotion of people, particularly the most vulnerable. This dominant motivation is the core of an infinite number of initiatives.

[86] There are other motivations that help the young person to become better, although they are still inadequate or insufficient for a SMV:

- have new experiences;
- learn about new places, people, cultures;
- to occupy free time usefully;
- enrich one's curriculum of study or work;
- look for new job opportunities;
- improve own personal skills;
- study and research cultural and social realities;
- self-assertion;
- search for recognition.

4.2. PERSONAL MATURITY

[87] As in any type of volunteering, it must be rich in human values:

- sufficient physical and mental health;
- flexibility and adaptability to the environment;
- capacity for communication, dialogue and sociability;
- availability for the free service;
- humility and desire to be educated by the environment;
- critical sense of reality and self-criticism;
- sincerity, honesty and transparency;
- respect and appreciation for local people and culture;

- ability to work as a team;
- affective and sexual maturity;
- equilibrium, serenity and common sense;
- sympathy, optimism and good humour;
- serious dedication to work and responsibility;
- organisation of one's own time and planning;
- competence and qualification in a professional field.

4.3. CHRISTIAN MATURITY

[88] At this point, the classic challenge arises: what can you propose to those who are not a Christian or non-practising? It is clear that according to this profile, he/she does not form part of the SMV, but that does not imply that other proposals of volunteering in the Salesian mission cannot be made. He/ she can also be invited to carry out volunteer activities in the mission, knowing that for many this is a way to discover the faith, and for some others it is a stable form of humanitarian service according to their personal convictions. They may even participate in joint meetings of the SMV but specifying the identity of each one. This demands from the Salesian community a pastoral wisdom that, on the one hand, knows how to give his/her place to each person of good will that is offered in the field of mission and, on the other hand, knows how to make meaningful and challenging proposals of Christian commitment. They are diversified proposals in concentric circles according to their Christian and Salesian identity, as similarly happens in the SYM (Cf. *FRSYM* 165-167):

- the SMV is a young person who lives and conveys the "joy of the Gospel";
- has chosen Christ and lives in ecclesial communion;
- lives volunteering as an expression of social, concrete and operative charity;
- feels he/she is sent by the Lord and by a community;
- gives a coherent testimony of his/her Christian life;
- feeds his/her faith by the Word of God, prayer and the sacraments;
- lives the Eucharist particularly as the sign of self-giving;

- finds in volunteering a way to discover and live out his/her vocation in the Church and in society;
- his/her **missionary vocation** requires him/her to reinforce some common aspects of the Christian life, which are lived with greater intensity: detachment from one's land, virtue of strength, sense of sacrifice, simplicity, sobriety, humility, patience, capacity for inculturation, a more intense life of prayer and a vision of faith, love for those most in need and a sense of community.

4.4. PROFESSIONALISM

[89] Above all, young people can offer a qualified service in a particular area. It is proper to their lay identity to place their skills and competencies in view of an integral promotion of the person. Being a volunteer does not diminish in any way one's professional responsibility; on the contrary, one is more predisposed to offer it with more dedication. Mission preparation in these areas certainly presupposes long-term training. A criterion in the various professional interventions consists in providing for continuity, offering collaboration for the formation of local staff.

In this field, with appropriate preparation for cooperation and development, Salesian NGOs offer a rich contribution to the professionalisation of volunteer service.

4.5. SALESIANITY

[90] Experience indicates that volunteers from Salesian projects, especially if they have developed animation activities, easily connect with new missions. Below are some characteristic features of the Salesian missionary style:

- youthful style;
- preference for the poorest among young people;
- educational presence among young people and confidence in young people;

- optimism, cheerfulness and a sense of humour;
- Oratorian heart;
- family spirit;
- simple, ecclesial, deep and popular religiosity;
- ability to work practically;
- creativity and flexibility;
- lives a life of chastity as an expression of selfless, transparent love and as a form of educational outreach for young people;
- sober lifestyle.

[91]

OPERATIVE CRITERIA AND STANDARDS

- When sending a SMV, one must give special attention to the young people who have followed a process in the Salesian Youth Ministry, in the Salesian Youth Movement (SYM), as animators, in groups or missionary movements.
- Specialised and appropriate formation must be provided for **candidates who do not come from a Salesian background**.
- There must be clear **provincial criteria** for the convocation, discernment, selection, formation and sending of the Salesian missionary volunteers. Establish a **volunteering project and a directory** indicating the routes, managers, methods, criteria and times for the selection, training and support of the candidates.
- The Province must take into consideration the young people from the **technical-professional field**, since there is a great demand in this area in the mission fronts.
- The contents, skills and formative experiences must be rich of human and evangelical values.
- With regard to affective maturity, motivated by a code of conduct, or even more, by an attitude of total, generous and evangelical devotion, the SMV **undertakes to live in chastity, sobriety and availability** especially during the time of mission³.

³ To live a certain time with undivided heart, a total dedication to the mission, in chastity, sobriety, simplicity (poverty) and complete availability to a common project (obedience), is not an exclusive privilege of the religious. This intense evangelical life proposed to the SMV, according to their state of life, will be of great help for the elaboration of their personal project of life and as an intense human and spiritual educational experience. On the other hand, these commitments greatly enhance their insertion in the mission by the educational strength of their testimony to youth and their moral authority. Several volunteer organisations propose it with excellent results; by way of example: ANG, CEP, ECU, MEG, PLE, PLS, SLK, SUE, SUO...

PIV

**A PROCESS
IN THE YOUTH
MINISTRY**



1 A process, a school of life

[92] One of the characteristics of the SMV, as well as of all volunteering in the Salesian context, is its educational dimension; it is truly a “school of life” and for this reason, it is necessary to support the **educative and pastoral processes**.

The model for this dynamic is the encounter on the road to Emmaus: *“the missionary approaches the young person and meets him or her with an attitude of listening and welcome, proclaiming the Gospel and offering to accompany the young person. Animation helps people to make the good news their own and assists them in the development of their conscience. It makes them aware of the motivations that drive their options and their critical thinking skills. It encourages their active involvement and makes them responsible agents in their own education”¹.*

Salesian pastoral and educational activity is a dynamic process that unfolds and takes into consideration certain fundamental and complementary dimensions. It is an anthropological, pedagogical and coherent spiritual frame of reference for accompanying young people in the delicate process of their growth as human beings in the faith².

This process offers **gradual experiences of service** and apostolic commitment, which converts the SMVs into witnesses and evangelisers and commits them to the social dimension of charity, making them protagonists of the construction of a more just, supportive and humane society³. In this way, young people develop one of the basic characteristics of Salesian spirituality: the **spirit of responsible service**⁴, which will make them suitable for volunteering.

¹ FRSYM, 122.

² Cf. FRSYM, 140.

³ Cf. FRSYM, 145.

⁴ Cf. FRSYM, 98.

[93] The **Salesian Youth Movement** (SYM) has proved to be the most effective educator of volunteers. Through its processes and itineraries, SYM has helped and still helps many young people to mature, to identify themselves with the pedagogy and the spirituality of Don Bosco and put themselves at the service of the mission. Within the SYM, the missionary movements and groups that grow sensitive to service, interculturality and missionary are noteworthy.

Moreover, volunteering has revealed itself as a great educational and evangelising opportunity for many **young adults** and **university students** who have not gone through a Salesian route but who want to give their talents and time to the service of others. In these cases, it is necessary to envisage appropriate plans for them, to help them discern and mature in their options. The offering of missionary volunteering to young people from non-Salesian environments is a gift for the local Church, for society and a great opportunity to offer them a personal-Christian itinerary of maturity.

It is important to carry out a process that avoids the attraction for a young person to “parachute in” to volunteering without a sufficient education programme in volunteering. This runs the risk of the volunteer perceiving the experience as an “event” or a “new adventure” to experience, without flourishing into a coherent project of life and commitment.

2 Stages of the journey of volunteering

[94] Salesian missionary volunteering is a unified reality, an educational process organically integrated into Salesian Youth Ministry. We suggest considering these four steps⁵:

1. **developing a culture of volunteering** and formation in its values (selfless service, openness to the other, solidarity ...) throughout

⁵ Cf. YOUTH MINISTRY AND MISSIONS DEPARTMENTS, *Voluntary Service in the Salesian Mission, Handbook and Guidelines* (Rome 2008) 29–31.

the entire educative and pastoral process with teenagers and adolescents;

2. training in voluntary service through **diverse experiences of generous and selfless service** such as animation, active participation in various associations or brief volunteering experiences;
3. the option of more committed volunteering during a prolonged period of time;
4. along this journey, and through these voluntary experiences, young people mature in **conscious and lasting vocational choices**.

3

A community that sends and that receives

[95] The community is a fundamental subject in this process of formation and accompaniment of the volunteer's maturation.

The Educative and Pastoral Community (EPC) is the "subject and, at the same time, object and scope of educative-pastoral action"⁶. The "animating nucleus" of the EPC summons, motivates and involves the members of the EPC. In turn, the **Salesian religious community**, with its spiritual heritage, its pedagogical style, its relations of fraternity and co-responsibility in the mission, represents the reference witness for the charismatic identity⁷.

⁶ *FRSYM*, 108.

⁷ Cf. *FRSYM*, 117–118.

[96] The volunteer's community experience can be lived at various levels⁸.

- a. **With the Salesian community that sends**, the Salesian community invites and welcomes the young people preparing them for volunteering. In it, the candidates experience and assume the values of pedagogy and Salesian spirituality. The volunteer on mission maintains a healthy communication with the sending community, sharing his/her experience. In turn, the community supports them in their experience and, on his/her return, helps in their reintegration.
- b. **With the Salesian community that welcomes**, volunteers assume the personal and evangelical riches they discover in the Salesian community that welcomes them, such as a vocation for education, passion for the salvation of the young, fraternity, family style and a life characterised by the life of evangelical counsels. The volunteer's presence enriches the Salesian community with a youthful outlook, making it more sensitive to the world of young people and motivating it in its apostolic enthusiasm. The local community sees to their accompaniment and formation during the service in the mission.
- c. With the **Educative and Pastoral Community**, volunteers become part of the EPC, sharing its Educative and Pastoral Project, they foster personal relationships, collaboration, participation and mutual enrichment. The EPC helps them to integrate in the environment and in the educational project.
- d. With the **provincial team of the SMV**, volunteers are accompanied by the team, where, thanks to its experience and ability, they become agents bringing suggestions and ideas to the young people. It is the link between the communities and the volunteers. The team accompanies the volunteers by visiting them, ensuring that there is a good communication between them and the host community. It guides the preparation, qualification and process of the volunteers through emails, meetings and dialogue.
- e. With the **culture** that receives them and the **local Church**, the volunteer integrates themselves with respect and

⁸ Cf. *Voluntary Service in the Salesian Mission*, 41–42.

humility into a new cultural and ecclesial context and learns to know and appreciate all the good and noble values that the new environment offers. As a missionary with a sense of interculturality, he/she patiently and earnestly learns the richness and cultural sensibilities inculcating the Gospel.

- f. Among the **volunteers themselves**, the Don Bosco family model, whether from the local or provincial community, inspires the relationship between the volunteers. They share the daily work, the joys and sufferings, the moments of growth, formation and prayer. In fraternity, they share their experience of volunteering.

4 Formation in SMV

4.1. FORMATIVE CRITERIA

[97] To offer an **integral formation** as disciple and missionary⁹, that enables the volunteer to carry out his/her service preferably as an educator and evangeliser to young people who are most in need, in the style of Don Bosco.

- **Witness:** consistent attitudes and behaviours with the recipients (dialogue, respect, faith, kindness, sensitivity, correctness).
- **Know:** to have knowledge of the cultural, social, religious and youth situation; the values, the language and everything that can be useful for the mission.
- **Prepare:** acquiring the appropriate professional competences for the context and the requested service.
- **Animate:** obtaining the pedagogical and pastoral skills to interact with young people, enabling their leadership role.
- **Take** into account the **gradual dimension** of personal growth, through a rich itinerary of contents and experiences, knowing how to abide times without rushing.
- **Insist** on the values that permeate the **daily life** of the family, community, group, study and work environment.

⁹ Cf. SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 160.

4.2. THREE STAGES IN FORMATION

[98] The formation that we present below has been outlined taking into account the needs of those who have volunteered. These needs were identified in the research conducted in 2016. We consider the three stages of the “before, during and after”.

[99] a. Formation before volunteering

Undoubtedly, the immediate and specific formation for the SMV service is preceded by a **broad, long-term formation** that has matured in the educative and pastoral path it has carried out in the community of origin (SYM, groups, educational centres, youth centres, parishes). It presupposes interventions of one to three weeks based on previous practices of volunteering or of missions.

For immediate formation, we identify from the various methods the most common:

- **weekly meetings**, such as pre-volunteer groups. This is possible where candidates live nearby. To these meetings can be added other activities such as retreats, regional or national meetings;
- **weekend meetings**, during a weekend of the month (from Friday to Sunday), up to ten meetings. This type of proposal is more frequent when the beneficiaries live geographically in the same province. Sufficient training should not take less than 145 hours;

- **intensive meetings**, for two or three weeks prior to departure;
- in addition to face-to-face meetings, there are interesting **online training** opportunities as a means of complementary formation.

This immediate formation must be concluded with the ecclesial and provincial “**sending**”, which gives relevance to the event and gives it a community and missionary dimension (to be sent).

The **formative schedule** must consider several dimensions: personal, affective, cultural, pedagogical, Salesian, technical, relational, educational, and theological-pastoral.

Some content that emerged from the questionnaires are highlighted:

[100] Personal development

NEED	CONTENTS	OBJECTIVES
• To know where I am, who I am.	• SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, Threats). • Individual Life Project.	• To help the volunteers get to know each other more deeply and have a plan of action to grow.
• To learn to communicate.	• Problem solving. • Effective communication. • Emotional intelligence.	• To train the volunteer in the art of communicating their thoughts and emotions.
• To know how to handle interpersonal relationships.	• How to develop a relationship. • How to end a relationship.	• To give tools to the volunteers so they know how to handle interpersonal relationships.
• To learn to adapt to the new reality.	• Inculturation. • Cultural Shock. • Flexibility and adaptability.	• To train volunteers to make their transition easier to another culture.
• To know and channel my emotions.	• The feelings. • Moments of solitude. • Know my sexuality. • Affective maturity.	• To help young people know how to handle feelings.
• To know how to handle moments of crisis.	• What to do when I am in times of crisis. • How to recognise crises. • Psychological health (burn out).	• To learn to handle moments of crisis.
• Health & Safety.	• Knowledge, prevention and treatment of the most common diseases.	• To provide important information.
• To learn to collaborate with other people.	• Teamwork. • Be proactive. • Appreciate the people I work with.	• To provide teamwork tools.
• To know volunteering.	• The SMV document, criteria, profiles, rights and duties. • Legal and economic aspects.	• To be aware of the identity and responsibilities in the SMV.
• Aspects of security and protection of minors.	• Know and agree to a Code of Conduct • Know rules and protocols in relation to minors. • Know the local regulations in this regard.	• Interact with the minors in a calm, safe and educational environment.

[101] Educational-pastoral tools

NEED	CONTENTS	OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To learn to work with children and young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child and adolescent psychology. Conflict management. Analysis of job description. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To give tools to volunteers so they can work with beneficiaries.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To know the social responsibility of a volunteer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The volunteer in the religious community. The volunteer with young people. The volunteer as a contact person for the beneficiary community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand the social responsibility of the volunteer within the community where he/she lives.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salesian pedagogy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preventive System. Assistance/support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide hands-on tools for working with young people and children.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To learn how to animate events and groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steps for strategic planning. Animation of groups. Group Dynamics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To learn to animate groups and events.

[102] Community life

NEED	CONTENTS	OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To know the meaning of community life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The figure of the volunteer in the community. Rights and responsibilities. Regulations for living a good community life importance of presence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To train the volunteer in conflict resolution within the community while at the same time raise awareness of the structures of local government.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To know how to act when someone is ill. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First aid. Basic principles of how to manage a disease. How to use health insurance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To give tools to the volunteers on how to act when they are unwell.

[103] Sociopolitical and cultural formation

NEED	CONTENTS	OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To know the culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Important information about the location of missions. Local culture (religious, social, political aspects). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide important information of the local neighbourhood where one will do mission.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To know the dynamics of global injustice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colonialism - neocolonialism. Underdevelopment and its causes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To know historical, economic and political structural causes of underdevelopment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To know the social doctrines of the Church. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socio-transforming vision of the Social Doctrine. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To have a Christian vision of the social problems and ways of intervention.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficient knowledge of the language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being able to communicate well in the mission.

[104] Christian and Salesian values

NEED	CONTENTS	OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To know the Catholic faith well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is and how to communicate with Jesus Christ. Elements of ecclesiology. Knowledge of the Bible. The Eucharist and Reconciliation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To form Catholic identity in the volunteer.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To know what it means to be a missionary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation of the conscience and Christian morality. Elements of missiology and missionary spirituality. Ecclesial Doc: AG, EN, RM, EG. Pedagogy of the initial proclamation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To acquire missionary criteria. To form missionary spirit.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to prayer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ways to develop a relationship with God. Models of meditation. How the breviary is used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To teach the volunteer how to pray with the religious community.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop a Personal Life Project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is a Personal Life Project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage the development of his/her vocational way.

NEED	CONTENTS	OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To know the Salesian Charism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of the life of Don Bosco and some elements of the history of the Congregation. The Salesian Oratory. The Salesian family and its groups. Salesian Youth Spirituality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To know more about who the Salesians are, their history and charism.

These are some of the contents, skills and competencies that can be addressed in the formation process before the volunteer is assigned to a mission. It should be taken into account whether a young person comes from a process of Salesian formation, such as from the Salesian Youth Movement. In such cases, formation can be reduced to a shorter version.

In some Provinces, particularly for those who have not had a sufficient period of prior contact with the Salesian community, a **psychological evaluation** is carried out.

[105] b. Formation during volunteering

It is advisable that during the volunteering experience there is a **time when volunteers can reflect** on the mission and what is happening in their lives. These moments of internalisation are important.

Towards the middle of this period it is appropriate to organise a **retreat**, which helps reflection and internalisation where volunteers develop their life plan, taking into account everything they have experienced so far. It is recommended to carry out an analysis of the experience from which a strategic plan can be created that will help them to improve.

It is also recommended that the volunteer or group of volunteers hold **meetings with local people** who can help them understand the reality of where they are living (culture, society, economy, religious

life, ecclesial life, young people's experiences). It is recommended to also have regular meetings with the Rector of the community or whoever is entrusted as the **contact person** for the volunteers to know how to communicate information, criteria, operation of the work, sharing and evaluating the experience, etc.

The use of **self-formation brochures** that help volunteers to meet the objectives previously proposed may be helpful.

When possible, the volunteer should participate daily in the Eucharist so that daily, he/she is shaped by the Word of God and the giving to Christ.

It is recommended that the volunteer be motivated to read topics covering the Salesian way (life of Don Bosco, Preventive System, other Salesian materials), topics of culture and history of the place, and that he/she may practice **Lectio Divina** as part of his/her ongoing formation.

[106] c. Formation after volunteering

When the participants in the survey were asked about what the most difficult stage of the volunteer experience was, we received the following answers:

Before the volunteer experience:	12.6%
During the volunteer experience:	34.2%
After the volunteer experience:	53.2%

This indicates that for the volunteers the **most critical stage of all their experience** is the **return to their place of origin**. Therefore,

a formative strategy is needed for this stage of re-adaptation and re-integration. The return to an anonymous normality, where their social recognition and the stimuli for self-esteem are not so strong; having left rewarding social relations, the return to a rhythm of life where everyday problems may seem banal compared to the intense experiences already lived.

All this can destabilise them and even lead to feelings of depression. This **destabilisation** is where the person **re-invents him/herself**, it is when the person can make decisions to creatively re-insert themselves, with the baggage of lived experience, into social and ecclesial life.

Some contents that can be taken into account in a post-experience formation are: vocational and professional discernment, the Social Doctrine of the Church with a view of a greater social and political commitment in society; the vocational proposals of the Salesian family, particularly the Salesian cooperators. The province should foresee the possibility of continuing to offer former volunteers other valid and demanding local opportunities for social volunteering.

**Accompanying means
"to share bread with
someone." It's about
sharing with another or
with others the purpose
of reaching a goal or
achieving something
together**

[107]

OPERATIVE CRITERIA AND STANDARDS

- Give priority and promote the SMV among the young people of our Salesian presences, particularly among the animators.
- Make **specific schedules** for the SMV candidates coming from non-Salesian presences.
- Provide **formation programmes** for both personal formation (psychological, social, human relations, interculturality, etc.), and for pedagogical, theological-pastoral and Salesian formation.
- **Immediate formation** for the national SMV cannot be less than **100 hours** and **145 hours** for the international SMV.
- In the immediate formation, a time for **personal reading** must be allotted, as well as **research** on the environment where the volunteer will be placed.
- Before international volunteering, **volunteer experiences** or **short-term missions** (occasional activities, or one to three-week experiences) must be proposed.
- Pay attention to the study of the **languages** of the places where volunteering will take place.
- For international volunteers, **competent professional formation** in some of the most required areas of the mission fronts must be planned.
- In the immediate formation, organise at least one **spiritual retreat** and a carefully prepared **missionary assignment**.
- Undertake the **discernment and selection** of the volunteers who will be sent on mission, particularly abroad, especially considering their psychological, personal and spiritual profile.
- Where possible, conduct a psychological evaluation with professionals.
- **During** the volunteering period, at least **two intense moments of spiritual exercises**, formation and community living are expected during the year.
- During the volunteering period, volunteers must receive the **formation** of the cultural, social, economic, religious, ecclesial, and youth **situation** of the region by competent local people.
- On the volunteer's **return**, organise as soon as possible some days of meeting to share experiences and evaluate them, incorporating psychological and spiritual support to assist with re-adapting to the new situation and planning for the future.
- The province volunteer coordinator addresses the three stages of the formation and accompaniment of volunteering: before, during and after, paying particular **attention to the return**.

5

Accompaniment in SMV

[108] As suggested by the Synod on the Youth:

Accompaniment for the sake of valid, stable and well-founded choices, is therefore a service that is widely needed. Being present, supporting and accompanying the journey towards authentic choices is one way for the Church to exercise her maternal function, giving birth to the freedom of the children of God¹⁰.

The verb to accompany comes from the Latin term “cumpaniare” means “to share bread with someone”. It is about sharing with another or with others the purpose of reaching a goal or achieving something together. Accompaniment is the encounter between two people who, sharing similar values, seek to integrate them into their own life history. This encounter makes them grow as people and as educators who identify themselves with the Salesian way of doing and feeling¹¹.

5.1. THE MEANING OF ACCOMPANIMENT

[109] Accompaniment of the SMV is the process through which support, orientation, guidance and follow-up of the SMV is offered throughout the entire experience, from the beginning (selection, discernment, formation) to the return and integration into the community of reference (place of origin or new community) their life plan continues. Therefore, it is not an isolated and occasional activity, but a constitutive aspect in the whole process. It is progressive, gradual and continuous, and looks at the maturation of the volunteer in view of his/her personal growth,

¹⁰ SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 91. They are of enormous wealth and illuminating for our reflection, also 95 and 99.

¹¹ Cf. PINELLA J., Seminary: *Acompañamiento en el Voluntariado Plataformas Sociales* (Madrid 2011).

vocational maturation, ecclesial belonging and his/her active participation in society. Consequently, it is an aspect that must always be present in the life and process of every SMV.

It is close accompaniment that guides the person in every moment, from his/her personal situation to clarify, discern and steer their life project, in constant relationship with the formation process. In this situation, the one who accompanies is the person who can empathise with the volunteer and facilitate a clear vision of him/herself. The guide should be broadminded and able to help the volunteer to look at the possible horizons for decision-making that the volunteer discovers and embarks upon one step at a time. It is essential to respond in a personalised way to the needs that are emerging throughout the experience.

In relation to faith, it is a mutual service in which the one who accompanies (the EPC, the group, the SDB or lay person) walks together with the accompanied to enrich each other in an exchange of values and living experiences of faith.

The accompaniment to the SMV is conceived with three different stages: the preparation, discernment and sending (**before**); the actual experience of volunteering (**during**); and return, integration into the community of origin or reference (**after**). And at three levels, **environment, group and personal**.¹²

5.2. BEFORE

[110] It is an accompaniment with clear objectives and an explicit framework. Its main purpose is **discernment**. It is the exercise of the option of missionary service as a result of a process of vocational maturation and of mature and operative faith and charity. It is a time for explicit and immediate

¹² *FRSYM*, Chapter V, 1.2. When Salesian Youth Ministry talks about accompanying people, different levels are distinguished, from a task assumed by the Educative and Pastoral Community. That is to say, it is understood as a task in which several people intervene at different levels, all of them contributing in the process of growth and maturation of the person who participates in an appropriate environment, in peer training processes in the space of a group of members and followed by an adult that favours and guarantees personalised attention.

preparation, a time for verification of the underlying motivations and a space to shed light on any concerns and to consolidate options in view of the decisions to be made.

[111] a. An accompanying Environment

Above all, accompaniment is offered by creating an educational environment. The volunteer feels at home, is in a climate of mutual help, circulation of ideas and affections, receives educational proposals that encourage him/her to make choices and assume commitment. The Salesian environment is characterised by animation through structures and organisational stages; for their educational, open, fraternal relations, respect and interest for people (Salesian assistance); for the permanent qualitative formation at various spiritual, Christian, Salesian levels, through formative itineraries that, in addition to allowing them to live for the young, help them to grow with them.

The Salesian community welcomes and integrates in its life and action the people who are willing to volunteer in order to prepare them for their integration in the future context of mission. The candidates experience in it, and assume from it, the values of pedagogy and Salesian spirituality.

[112] b. Group accompaniment

The group is a pedagogical and educational context; through it, it is possible to accompany people, attentive to the pace and variety within a single journey and in response to the interests of the people. Participation in a group helps young people to find their own identity more easily, and to recognise and accept the diversity of others. It is almost an obligatory step to mature *an experience of community and the Church*. One may also think of creating a group of "pre-volunteering."

[113] c. Personal accompaniment

This level deals with accompanying the volunteers in their Christian growth and in their more personal choices. It is a "one-

to-one" process, respecting of the volunteer's individuality. It is characterised by personalised dialogue and a close educative relationship. The **dialogue-interview** has a particular value and function. The dialogue restores pastoral attitudes. Salesian action awakens in the young an active and critical collaboration in the educational path, according to his/her possibilities, options and personal experiences. It strengthens the desire for dialogue and discernment; stimulates the internalisation of everyday experiences in order to decipher their messages; encourages differentiation and positive criticism; stimulates reconciliation with oneself and the recovery of inner calm; encourages the consolidation of personal and Christian maturity. The timing of these options and these experiences are not the same in everyone, and even the situations and decisions that young people encounter are not the same. Accompaniment develops an educative and pastoral service in relation to each individual, valuing their personal experiences, and makes life the central theme of educative and spiritual dialogue.

5.3. DURING

Accompaniment is carried out during the volunteer service experience and has the objective of helping to integrate several aspects.

[114] a. An accompanying Environment

This accompaniment goes through several stages.

- The stage focused on the **emotional and psychological dimensions** that produces a change of life in their time and rhythms, a new living space where one lives with others and shares life in common spaces and perhaps at a distance from family or friends, new relationships with new people in the Educative and Pastoral Community, the SDB community and the beneficiaries of the volunteering mission. There is a latent desire to return home and leave the experience at any time, aggravated by crises in relationships.

- There is the stage of **cultural and/or religious shock** in which one's own identity is questioned, and requires a great exercise of adapting and overcoming emotional stress and homesickness, and to incorporate the local dynamics in all dimensions in order to settle in to the new lifestyle and cultural and religious expressions.
- There is the stage of **inculturation** in which the volunteer begins to feel comfortable with the culture, understands it and internalises aspects of it.
- There is the stage of **integration**. This is usually a moment of consolidation of the experience in which there is a propensity for security and autonomy, giving the impression that accompaniment is no longer needed. The desire to return home completely disappears.

Not all people live these four stages in the same way, with the same intensity or duration. But at the beginning it is better to focus on more practical aspects such as physical health (housing, food ...), psychological health, i.e., their moods: satisfaction or dissatisfaction, their inculturation and closeness to the people with whom they intend to work, difficulties encountered in this task, relationships with colleagues and mission partners and the SDB community; how he/she manages to carry out tasks; the experience of his/her faith or expression of religious convictions and vocational maturity.

The Salesian community that welcomes, and in a special way the Rector, in person or via his delegate, plays an important role in this process of accompaniment.

[115] b. Group accompaniment

The permanent relationship with the group they belong to as well as group accompaniment help volunteers to maintain their vocational origin and to grow in their sense of belonging.

The mutual support between the volunteers themselves is fundamental. Communication, daily sharing of the experience

as a whole and the personal experience are an incentive to grow and internalise the experience. The group meeting can be held at local community level, as well as at provincial level, together with volunteers involved in other communities.

The volunteer also maintains a frequent relationship with the group that sent him/her, whether it is the Salesian community or the volunteer organisation to which the volunteer belongs, the SYM, where he/she began his/her formation process.

[116] c. Personal Accompaniment

The Salesian Community that welcomes the volunteers guarantees their personal accompaniment, appointing a competent Salesian, often the Rector, or lay person for this purpose during their volunteer experience. This accompaniment will be systematic, progressive, steady and frequent. It can become spiritual, consolidating faith as life in Christ and as an important sense of existence. It helps to discern the personal vocation of each one in the Church and in the world, and to grow constantly in the spiritual life right up to holiness.

- The **Rector of the community** that sends or receives a volunteer, establishes a close and paternal relationship, as he is the first manager and animator of those who form his community. This is why the volunteer establishes a filial and trusting relationship with the one who acts as Don Bosco in the community.
- The **Provincial volunteering team** accompanies the volunteers and, in particular, this is the task of the Provincial Delegate for Missionary Animation, as the link between communities and volunteers. The team and the provincial delegate accompany the volunteers by visiting them and caring about their trouble-free integration in the host community. Regular emails can be a great help. Whoever performs this ministry of accompanying at the provincial level must possess various qualities: personal stability,

empathy, communication skills, ability to maintain a professional distance, and should have lived the experience of having been accompanied.

- The **community of origin** also has a role in the accompaniment: some have an former volunteer, who acts as a “**mentor**” who accompanies the new ones. In addition, some organisations ask for a **monthly report** in which, in addition to chronicling the activities and the reality in which they live, volunteers also share their innermost thoughts and feelings of the experience. On one hand, this record helps the volunteer to internalise their experience and, on the other, their testimony is very helpful to the young people and members of the community of origin.
- As the end of the experience approaches, it is appropriate to **prepare the volunteer and the community** in such a way as to avoid emotional or relationship crises. The reactions can be varied: satisfaction, lament or regret, relief and even fear of change and of what to do on their return. Sometimes, it is difficult to separate oneself from a project that, after all the dedicated effort, begins to bear fruit or is in danger because there is no one to take over. It is necessary to **prepare the return**, giving equal importance to the departure and to the welcome at home. It is necessary to plan it in the volunteer’s new community, so that the convictions, the learning, the changes experienced, the existential relocation are calmly assimilated.

5.4. AFTER

[117] As we have seen from the surveys, the accompaniment at the return is the most delicate stage to which the Province that sent, and now receives the volunteer back, must pay attention. It is a time of re-adaptation and elaboration of the life project. The return must ensure that the experience lived “during” the volunteering has continuity in the choices and convictions, where the acquired learning is applied and updated in the new circumstances.

It is recommended that a process of **reintegration** into the community of origin is provided, in which, even with psychological help, a composed growth is ensured. In this process, spiritual and pastoral support is necessary too. Attention must also be given to economic support, helping them resume their work activities¹³.

[118] a. An accompanying Environment

It will be fundamental to accompany the volunteers in the process of **reintegration** into their community, group or association of origin, and to help them take part in activities which they had deferred such as housing, studies, vocational discernment, profession, systematic apostolate, in such a way that there is no interruption in the vocational process, but a new step in the journey.

[119] b. Group accompaniment

It will also be a good idea to establish some form of contact with the community, friends, group, but above all with the companion of the previous “during” stage, to continue a healthy relationship, nourish the experience from a distance, and not forget what was lived. Likewise, it will be pertinent to look for opportunities where the volunteer can share his/her experience and testimony to other young people and candidates for volunteering in his/her community as well as at the provincial level. This is a chance to reintegrate the volunteers into their group of origin or into another appropriate group within the Salesian family (Salesians cooperators, past pupils), to continue their ongoing formation and systematic accompaniment. The person responsible for provincial volunteering can organise regular activities with the former volunteers, including giving it an institutional form.

¹³ The GC 24 clearly insisted on this aspect: That the local community, upon the return of the volunteers, “accompany them in the acquisition of a just psychological-affective balance, through a fraternal welcome in the family, ecclesial and social environment; take into account the economic aspect, helping them to enter the world of work and favouring those commitments that are in tune with their choice of life” (124). “I helped them in a critical rereading of their experience and to a re-projection of their life in the light of the novelties they find in themselves and in the new environment that receives them” (125).

[120] c. Personal accompaniment

It is very important to identify and contact beforehand the companion who will accompany the volunteer during this “after” time, and clearly establish the times and rhythms for a systematic, progressive, steady and permanent accompaniment.

As soon as the experience is completed, the Provincial team or the supervisor for provincial volunteering will offer training and follow-up with psychological help to assist the social reintegration. It is advisable to organise further meetings between former volunteers.

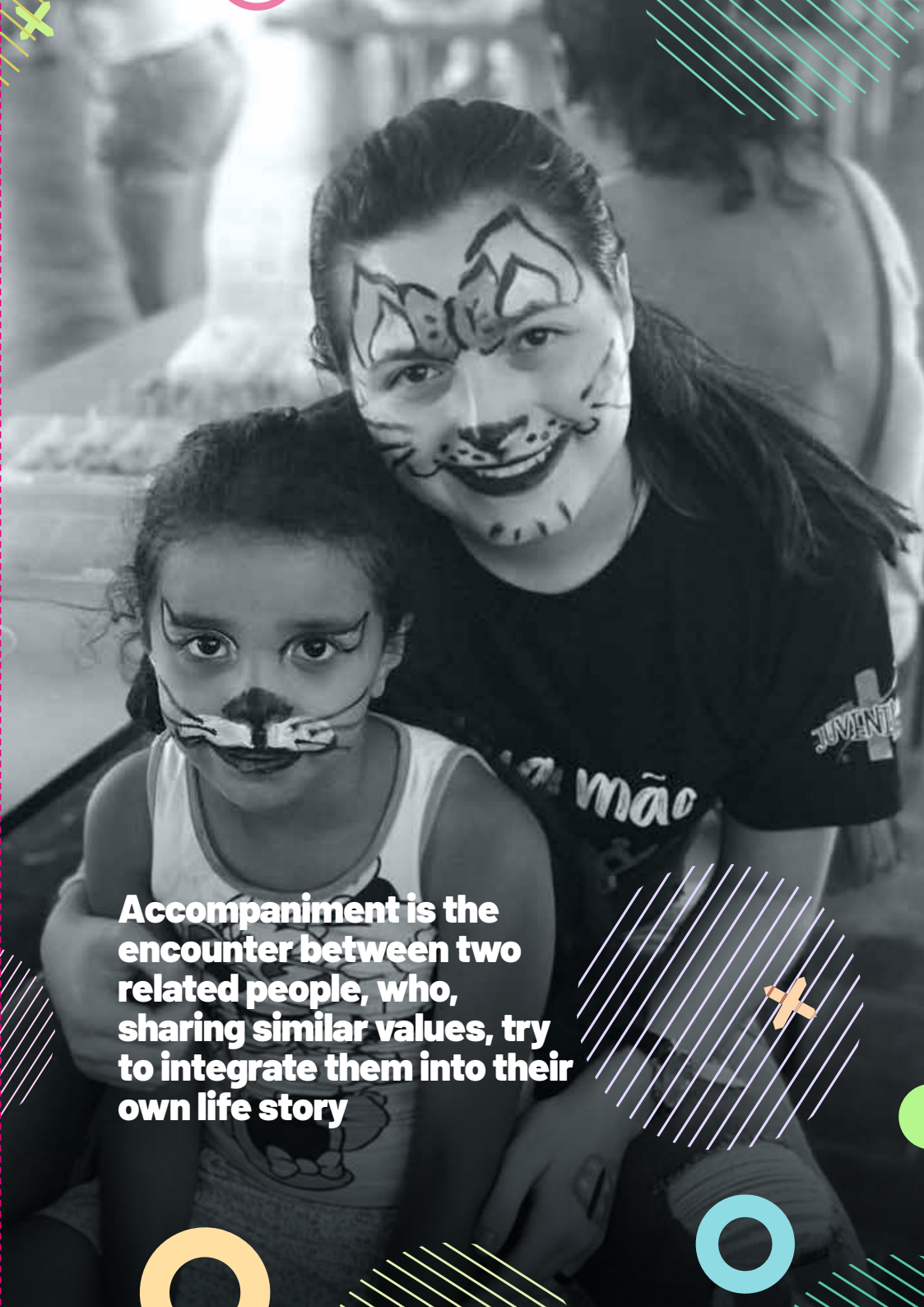
This accompaniment must **facilitate a discernment** in one’s life project: *“a vigorous and meaningful apostolic proposal that is lived together and a proposal of spirituality rooted in prayer and in the sacramental life. In this way, there are all the necessary ingredients so that the Church can offer young people who wish it a profound experience of vocational discernment”¹⁴.*

¹⁴ SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 161. Cf. 7, 69, 70, 104.


[121]

OPERATIONAL CRITERIA AND STANDARDS

- Each province should designate a **Salesian responsible for Provincial Volunteering**, who coordinates, possibly with a provincial team, the accompaniment of the volunteers of those who are sent and of those received.
- The local Salesian community tracks the volunteers who provide a service in the centre or house, taking care of their formation, making them participate in the life of the community and guiding them in the exercise of their responsibilities.
- During the experience, arrange at least a **six-monthly meeting over several days** with all the SMVs who are in the province (spiritual exercises, programmes of communitarian life, formation), organised by the provincial volunteering team.
- During volunteering at least **once a month** the Rector or the local person in charge of volunteering has a informal conversation with the volunteer to accompany his/her experience.
- During the experience, when there is a **community of volunteers at the local level**, they should meet periodically to schedule, evaluate, train, pray together and relax. A weekly community *lectio divina* is recommended.
- During the mission, the volunteers will prepare a monthly **report** of their activities and experiences, and to share it with their community of origin.
- The **PDMA** of the community of origin of volunteering maintains a friendly **communication** with the volunteers in mission and with the Provincial responsible for the host community.
- Upon return, make a spiritual and psychological **evaluation meeting** and accompaniment of the volunteer as soon as possible.
- Promote the inclusion, as far as possible, of the volunteer into the groups of the Salesian family, particularly the Association of Salesian Cooperators.
- On the return of volunteers, the local community will accompany them in the acquisition of a proper psychological and affective balance, through a **fraternal welcome** in the family, ecclesial and social environment and taking into account the economic aspect, helping them to become part of the world of work (GC 24, 124).
- On the return of volunteers, the PDMA encourages **periodic meetings between former volunteers** and other young people and adults to promote volunteering; the PDMA helps former volunteers to make a critical reading of their experience and a re-planning of their lives (GC 24, 125).



Accompaniment is the encounter between two related people, who, sharing similar values, try to integrate them into their own life story



VOLUNTARIO

ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE OF SMV



[122] In order to guide the organisation of Salesian Missionary Volunteering, there are some suggestions for animation and governance that demand an organic plan of intervention for the Provincial or Inter-Provincial Youth Ministry and Missionary Animation. Some pointers that can help establish the organisation are described below¹.

1. The sending communities (local and provincial).
2. The host communities (local and provincial).
3. SMV and NGOs.
4. Inter-provincial and global animation.

1 The Community that sends

[123] The Salesian communities that send (local or provincial), promote, discern, form and accompany young people eager to experience the missionary volunteering through their life and activity. The community of origin is called to extend the generosity of the gift of self, the missionary apostolate, values, Salesian pedagogy and spirituality. Each community can send or receive volunteers.

1.1. THE LOCAL COMMUNITY LEVEL

[124] The local Salesian community and the EPC are in primary positions of authority for the Salesian mission in the territory and, therefore, also for the Salesian missionary volunteering that takes place in it. For this reason, local communities must:

- assume and promote the **province's volunteering project**. Local communities must know the diversity of the volunteering experience, the identity, the priorities and the methodology of the voluntary service of the province and integrate it into their SEPP;

¹ Cf. *Voluntary Service in the Salesian Mission*, 54–61.

- promote locally, according to the recipients, different forms of volunteering, giving particular emphasis to the SMV;
- accompany in their community the group of “**pre-volunteers**” of the SMV, helping them to clarify their motivations and their maturation process;
- send candidates for volunteering to the provincial, national or regional meetings of the SMV;
- maintain contact with young volunteers during their mission, asking them to share their experience;
- cordially accompany the volunteers who return to their community after their service, offering a fraternal welcome, helping them to integrate into the community, in the Church and in society;
- ensure there is a celebration to mark when some young people from their community go on mission.

[125] a. The Rector

He has the primary responsibility for SMV in the local community, the one who creates awareness and culture of missionary animation among the brothers and the EPC. He encourages those responsible for Youth Ministry and Missionary Animation to promote SMV in their community and to involve the Salesian community and the EPC in knowing, accompanying and welcoming the volunteers.

[126] b. The local missionary animator, contact person of SMV

He is the main point of contact for the SMV: it could be a Salesian or a lay person of the EPC suitable for the accompaniment of the candidates. It is important that there is a contact person for the SMV, who can be the same Rector. The contact person is attentive to:

- **promoteing volunteering** in the Salesian work and in the surrounding region. In communion with other educational agencies, he is a spokesperson for this dimension in all youth environments and encourages young people to take an interest in volunteering;
- **favouring the community experience** of volunteers and candidates, including them into the Salesian family environment, offering

them the opportunity of a gradual and greater commitment in the community and in the province and offering spaces and times of participation and co-responsibility within the EPC;

- forming the group of “**pre-volunteers**” or candidates for the SMV and accompanies them systematically, in a group and individual way. The group of candidates can sometimes be formed by young people from various Salesian houses geographically nearby;
- establishing contact with the **families** of the young candidates, accompanying them and involving them in the choices of the young people;
- **assisting** the candidates to develop their **personal life project** and guide them vocationally, indicating to them the diversity of vocations in the Salesian family;
- working in communion with the PDMA, the volunteer contact person and his team, maintaining smooth communication and **coordinated** action in the selection and formation of the candidates;
- fraternally **accompanying** the volunteers who return from their mission, helping them to their integration back into ordinary life, assimilating them into the life and pastoral animation, particularly in the SMV and the missionary animation, being able to assume the formation and the accompaniment of the new volunteers.

1.2. THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL

[127] a. The Provincial

The Provincial, with his Provincial Council, is the first person in charge of Youth Ministry and Missionary Animation in the Province and, therefore of Salesian missionary volunteering. It is the responsibility of the Provincial, as head of the provincial community, to send the missionary volunteers to their missionary service and to accept those sent from their provinces. He and his Council assume responsibility to:

- help the confreres and the local communities to **recognise the importance** of volunteering for the Salesian mission²;

² GC 24, 126.

- implement an SMV **provincial project** according to the Provincial SEPP;
- approve the **directory** of the SMV;
- indicate a person responsible for provincial missionary volunteering and the SMV;
- ensure the necessary **financial** support;
- accompany the **discernment of sending** international volunteers;
- **contact** other provincials who welcome volunteers from his province;
- ensure the calm integration and local inclusion on the volunteer's **return** from his/her mission;
- celebrate the act of **missionary sending** of the SMV, in the context of the Eucharist.

[128] b. The Provincial Project of SMV

The project, that must be in full harmony with the OPP and Provincial SEPP, must also:

- express clearly the **objectives** pursued by the SMV in the province;
- identify those **responsible** for the SMV and their functions: Provincials, Rectors, local contact persons, PDMA, his SMV provincial team;
- clarify the volunteer's **profile** and the **criteria** for selection discernment;
- indicate training **itineraries**, their content, methodologies, competencies and experiences;
- supervise the **accompaniment** before, during and after the mission;
- implement the **directory** that indicates practical elements for carrying out the volunteer service: legal, economic, logistical aspects, code of conduct.

[129] c. The PDMA

This figure at the head of the SMV is fundamental. He or She is the contact person placed by the Provincial for the animation of provincial volunteering and particularly the SMV. He/She must form

an **SMV animation team**, normally integrated by former volunteers. The head of such a team forms part of the **Provincial Youth Ministry team**. It interacts with the other Provincial commissions and delegations: such as associations (SYM), schools, universities, youth centres, social services, parishes, Salesian family, social communication, economer (PPDO), and Salesian NGOs. Some of his/her tasks are:

[130] To promote the SMV

- animates the Salesians, the EPCs and the various commissions within the Youth Ministry Team, especially the SYM, motivating the importance of SMV and raising awareness about its identity and specificity;
- maintains close cooperation with the missionary groups of the province. -contacts the volunteers and candidates of the Salesian communities and the NGOs of the province dedicated to the promotion of volunteering, accompanying them in their process of discernment and formation;
- maintains relations of communication and collaboration with Salesian NGOs, civil and ecclesial volunteer organisations;
- in collaboration with the Delegation of Social Communication, takes care of the dissemination of the volunteer project. A website is recommended for the SMV of the Province.

[131] To take care of the formation and accompaniment of the SMV

- implements a provincial training plan for volunteering;
- accompanies the process of selection and preparation of volunteers;
- organises brief volunteering experiences (retreats, Easter missions, etc.) as preparation for a more committed service;
- accompanies the volunteers when they start their service; keeps in touch with them and visits them whenever possible;
- upon the volunteer's return from mission, accompanies the delicate stage of reintegration of the former volunteer into the community of origin, the elaboration of his/her life project and vocation, and their new incorporation into the ecclesial and social life;

- supervises, according to the SMV directory, the various legal, logistical and economic aspects of the mission.

[132] To coordinate volunteering at the provincial level

- encourages and coordinates the local contacts for volunteering in general and for SMV in particular;
- is the provincial and unit reference point for volunteers and voluntary organisations;
- visits the communities where volunteers are prepared (pre-volunteers);
- maintains communication with the destinations of volunteers and with local partners, especially with the ones responsible for volunteering in the destination province;
- is part of and meets periodically the Youth Ministry Team of the province, and maintains contacts with the Missionary Animation, Social Communication and Salesian family;
- prepares the Provincial celebration of the missionary expedition;
- reports regularly to the Provincial and his Council on SMV activities;
- takes care of the updated archive of the candidates, the volunteers and former volunteers, as well as the evaluations of experiences, so as to guarantee continuity and provide appropriate documentary evidence;
- favours the incorporation of former volunteers in the teams of animation of SMV, supporting the experiences of volunteering, collaborating in the formation of new volunteers and spreading the culture of volunteering;
- requests the volunteers for reports of their experience.

[133] OPERATIVE CRITERIA AND STANDARDS

- **Pre-volunteer** missionaries groups within the various groups in the local communities must be promoted.
- The **local missionary supervisor** must be named, as local point of reference for volunteers in general and for SMV.
- The **families** of SMV candidates must be involved.
- The local reference person for missionary animation must take care of the formation and accompaniment of the volunteers before, during and after the mission.
- The Provincial adapts and implements a provincial plan and a directory for the SMV.
- The **Provincial** is the one who concludes the discernment and receives or sends the SMV to other provinces or countries.
- A **PDMA**, who possesses sufficient time to develop its mission of organisation, formation, accompaniment and sending of the SMV, must be designated as provincial responsible for volunteering and the SMV.
- The PDMA forms part of the **Youth Ministry Team**.
- At the provincial, national, regional and global levels, a **database** must be established, collecting the data of candidates for volunteering, former volunteers and places where they are requested.

2 The Community that welcomes

[134] As for the structure and organisation of volunteering in the communities that welcome the volunteers, they should follow the same structure of the sending communities.

The religious community and the EPC must be prepared for the reception of the volunteers, and the Salesian confreres must be duly informed and consulted.

The Salesian community accompanies the volunteers who offer a service to the house, taking care of their formation, making them participate in the life of the community and guiding them in the service of educational and apostolic responsibilities³.

It is important to inform clearly, undersign and offer the necessary guarantees regarding the code of conduct of educators, which governs the insertion of the volunteer in the educational community, and the clear rules regarding the "Safety and Protection of minors" according to the rules of each country.

2.1. THE RECTOR AS THE FIRST LOCAL GUIDE

[135] The Rector must be aware that the volunteer is a valuable collaborator for the mission, but he is also a recipient of it. Therefore, he:

- directly accompanies the missionary experience of the volunteer, with the possible help of a local contact person;
- presents the volunteer to the EPC and integrates him/her into their house and its dynamics;
- has a personal dialogue with the volunteer at least once a month;
- supervises the physical, psychological and spiritual health of the young missionary.

2.2. THE PROVINCIAL

[136] The Provincial with his Council and in dialogue with the PDMA studies the volunteer candidates who request to be accepted by the province.

³ Cf. GC 24, 124.

After having examined their CV and profile, they will decide whether or not it is appropriate to welcome them and the type of service they can perform in the province⁴.

2.3. THE PROVINCIAL PROJECT OF THE SMV

[137] As indicated above, the host community should have a volunteering project similar to the one that governs local and international SMV. The project must:

- express clearly the **objectives** pursued by the SMV in the province;
- identify those **responsible** for the SMV and their functions: the Provincial, the Rector, the local contacts, the provincial responsible, the provincial team;
- clarify the **profile** of the volunteer and the criteria for a discernment in the selection;
- indicate training **itineraries**, contents, methodologies, competences and experiences;
- guarantee the **accompaniment** before, during and after the mission;
- draft a **directory** that indicates practical elements for the realisation of the volunteer service: legal, economic, logistical aspects, code of conduct.

2.4. THE PDMA WITH HIS SMV TEAM

[138] The PDMA in a province that receives volunteers is a figure of great importance because he/she is the point of reference for volunteers.

⁴ The practice of some Province in which a particular house or a Salesian has to go on his own voluntarily to his work, in a disconnected way with the provincial project of volunteering, without the consent of the provincial and the PDMA must be surpassed. Sometimes there are complaints about the profile and activities of some expatriate volunteers who operate in the provinces. The root of the problem lies in the host province itself, which has not been concerned with making sufficient communication, a prior clarification on the identity of the Salesian mission, on the criteria necessary for such a mission; There has been a lack of attentive discernment for the acceptance of volunteers, especially those who come for a prolonged period. The role and clarity of the PROVINCIAL in this process is fundamental.

He/She must, therefore, possess the personal qualities that inspire confidence and:

- maintain a fluid **communication** with the community that sends the volunteer;
- maintain a fraternal **accompaniment** and friendship with the volunteers;
- organise at least two intense annual **meetings** of 3 to 6 days, such as spiritual exercises, formation, experiences of community life, sharing of experiences;
- **visit** them regularly in their communities, seeking to solve possible irregularities or difficulties;
- maintain **personal contact** with them through email and social media;
- prepare a written **evaluation** of the experience of the volunteers and present it to the Provincial Council and to the community of origin;
- supervise the **legal aspects** of the volunteers' stay in the country (updated documents);
- is attentive and available to solve the **health** problems of the volunteers.

2.5. PROFILE OF THE RECEIVING COMMUNITY

[139] While it is evident that a Salesian community must essentially be simple, generous, cheerful, welcoming, capable of inspiring the Salesian spirit (*Const. 58*), formative and capable of accompanying, it is appropriate to emphasise some aspects to bear in mind:

- a coherent evangelical life, which radiates the absoluteness of God;
- testimony of fraternity in words and works;
- passionate apostolic passion, especially for the poorest among young people;
- serious, systematic and simple life of prayer centred on the Word, the Eucharist and Marian devotion;

- fundamental human values of the Family Spirit;
- sense of spiritual fatherliness;
- ability to welcome, converse and listen to volunteers;
- sensitivity to the needs of the other person (material, psychological, emotional, spiritual needs);
- community that educates to faith and to the inclusion of a missionary environment;
- diplomatic and educational firmness;
- interest in the life and activities of the volunteer;
- openness and ability to involve volunteers in some decisions, avoiding forms of authoritarianism;
- sense of appreciation, which avoids any attempt to exploit the other person.

[140] OPERATIVE CRITERIA AND STANDARDS

- The **Provincial** with his Council has primary responsibility in accepting volunteers from abroad in general and from SMV to his province.
- A PDMA must be named as **provincial supervisor of the SMV** for contacts prior to the arrival of volunteers from abroad, to analyse if their profile corresponds to the needs of the mission.
- The PDMA helps the volunteers to integrate themselves in their community, gives them the necessary information and communications, as well as the material to better understand the local culture and situation. He oversees their accompaniment.
- The PDMA organises spiritual exercises, formative meetings and retreats for the SMV at the provincial or national level.
- The communities that host volunteers must be prepared with the qualities and virtues of our family spirit.
- The **local Rector**, as the main local guide of the volunteers, has a conversation with the volunteers at least once a month; he looks after their physical, psychological and spiritual health.



Salesian Missionary Volunteering and NGOs

[141] *Among the various forms of organisation of Salesian voluntary service, there are Salesian NGOs that promote Salesian voluntary service in the social, international and missionary context. They are non-profit associations, recognised in civil society, that promote social justice, equality, development and the safeguarding of human rights, without institutional links with governments and their policies; they work with professionalism in the field and try, through timely projects, to respond to the urgencies of society with opportunity and effectiveness⁵.*

NGOs operating in the Salesian mission have developed and played an important role in the promotion, formation and sending of volunteers.

As experiences and approaches of NGOs and volunteering are different and complex, a generic standardisation is not possible. This implies finding for each case the most appropriate voice with the Provincial Salesian Youth Ministry and Missionary Animation, which respects the identity and mission of the NGO, on the one hand, and on the other the charismatic identity, structure and organisation of the Salesian Youth Ministry.

3.1. TYPES OF NGOS

[142] Classifications are useful to better understand how to convey volunteering, youth ministry, missionary animation and the NGOs. We can distinguish at least three types of NGOs.

1. **Institutionally Salesian NGOs.** These belong fully to the Salesian Congregation and are institutionally integrated in it. The statutes, identity, policies and decisions are fully in accordance with SEPP and OPP and are animated and governed

⁵ *Voluntary Service in the Salesian Mission*, 60.

by the province or by a group of Salesian Provinces. The Provincial, or group of Provincials and their delegates, are ultimately responsible for its organisation and policies.

2. **Salesian-inspired NGOs.** These NGOs are inspired by the figure and mission of Don Bosco and seek to support the Salesian mission. These organisations are autonomous from the jurisdiction of the provinces. On a case by case basis, according to their statutes, they will be more or less institutionally linked to the Province or group of Salesian Provinces. They usually have their executive direction and assemblies formed by lay people. The presence of Salesians in these NGOs is usually related to charismatic counselling and accompaniment, but not always with decisions and governance.
3. **NGOs that collaborate with the Salesian mission.** These organisations are very different from each other and, depending on the case, find points of collaboration with the Salesian mission: in education, professional formation, marginalisation, migration, personal development in general and evangelisation. These organisations are completely autonomous with respect to the Salesian organisation.

3.2. OPPORTUNITIES OF NGOS IN THE SALESIAN MISSION

[143] The NGOs have characteristics that enrich, complement and strengthen the Salesian mission. They:

- present the **civic and secular face** of Salesian values of education and the promotion of the neediest among young people in civil society, governing bodies and diverse manifestations of cooperation;
- give greater **visibility** to the “Work of Don Bosco” in the world;
- collect public and private **funds** to support and develop the Salesian mission;

- disseminate the **culture of solidarity**, globalisation and interculturalism; promote human rights, social justice and development in areas and forums in which the Salesians of Don Bosco are not usually present;
- enable many **lay** people to get involved in the Salesian mission, especially in the areas of promoting human values;
- offer greater **professionalism** and efficiency to the educational and human values interventions, ensuring better planning and a more orderly, efficient and transparent administration;
- are a great help for the Provincial Planning and Development Office offering technical planning and professional advice;
- promote national and international **volunteering**, both at the Provincial level and outside of it, convening volunteers, training them, accompanying them and sending them to frontier posts of the Salesian mission;

[144] Together with the rich contribution of NGOs to the Salesian mission, sometimes there are also some difficulties to be avoided.

- Sometimes, by introducing organisational and professional criteria, which are valid in themselves, they can gradually override the **Salesian charismatic and pastoral criteria** in the planning and implementation of the projects⁶.
- In relation to volunteering, if there is not proper communication with the Salesian Province, there is a risk that parallel structures and criteria are created which deviate from youth ministry in relation to volunteering. In this way, there is a risk of sending **volunteers who are not very well versed with the Salesian mission** and with insufficient reintegration into the Salesian reality of origin after the returning from the volunteer experience.

⁶ The NGO in the Salesian mission is a valuable and effective instrument, but it cannot be an end in itself. The Salesian NGO is part of the Salesian mission and therefore of the Church; and as Pope Francis insisted, the Church is not an NGO (*Meeting with young Argentines in Brazil* July 28, 2013): The Church is the work of God, it is the family of God (*Catechesis* May 29, 2013). He/She must confess Jesus Christ: if he/she does not, he/she will end up being a welfare NGO (*Address to the Cardinals* March 14, 2013); The Christians are full-time, you are not a Christian in time determined as in an NGO (*Catechesis* May 15, 2013). You cannot reduce Christian activity to do social good, taking as an example St. Teresa of Calcutta (*Homily in Saint Marta* May 28, 2013). There is the “functionalist” danger of the Church that reduces it to the structure of an NGO. (*Meeting with CELAM in Brazil* July 28, 2013).

- At times, there may be some ambivalence or **terminological confusion** about what is meant by volunteering. It can be mistaken for cooperation, civil service, internship, cultural exchange, justice/solidarity tourism, a training experience, or other forms of sending young people and professionals to the Salesian mission.

3.3. NGOS AND THE SMV

[145] It is essential that every NGO develops a volunteering programme. Such volunteering can have different characteristics, depending on its cultural context, recipients and identity of the NGO, which does not necessarily identify with the SMV. Such programmes enjoy a clear autonomy vis-à-vis the Salesian Youth Ministry. The volunteers identified and trained can be sent by the NGO where they find it most appropriate, including Salesian presences in common agreement with the Provinces that receive them. It will depend on the type and identity of the volunteer organisation, identifying what are the methods and the selection and training criteria for this submission. Even though there are different types of “volunteers” and a great degree of autonomy, a fruitful collaboration between the NGOs and the Salesian Youth Ministry in the country of origin and the host country through the PDMA responsible for Provincial volunteering is desirable.

[146] The Salesian missionary volunteer is sent by a home Province, usually to a Salesian presence, in agreement with another province or groups of provinces. There is a community that sends and another that receives, a Provincial-level Council that discerns the sending and another that discerns the welcome. The selection process and training can be perfectly carried out by one of the Salesian NGOs that operate in the province, but should follow the criteria for selection, suitability and training according to the provincial guidelines and options of both the YM and the MA for the SMV Provincial Project. The implementation and accompaniment are coordinated by the PDMA, who collaborates in the process in discussion with the NGOs.

The sending of the SMV is officially carried out by the Provincial, or his delegate, as a sign of the missionary spirit and communion among the Provinces.



The volunteer is a valuable contributor to the mission, but is also the recipient of the mission

On the other hand, the SMV prepared by an NGO will be fully integrated in the volunteer project of the host Province, having the local PDMA and the local Rectors as the main points of contact.

[147] OPERATIVE CRITERIA AND STANDARDS

- Salesian NGOs are promoted as charismatic and solidary presence in the civil context.
- Salesian NGOs and the PDMA work in a coordinated way on volunteering.
- Salesian NGOs seek, as far as possible, to include the SMV in their volunteering proposals.
- When a Salesian NGO organises the SMV in its process, it should do so in coordination with the PDMA, following the provincial criteria and formation processes.
- The final discernment on the acceptance of the candidates for volunteering, both for sending and receiving them, is up to the Provincial.

4 Some practical aspects

[148] Without claiming to deal with everything in these practical aspects such as the legal, logistical and economic fields, it seems opportune to offer at least some suggestions originating from diverse experiences.

Many of these aspects may be included in the **directory** for volunteering, which may include the profile of the volunteers, their age, the length of their stay and the ways in which volunteers were welcomed into Salesian communities.

4.1. LEGAL ASPECTS

[149] Some important aspects to keep in mind are:

- an **agreement** between the Province that receives the SMV and the Province that sends. This agreement establishes the duties and rights of the volunteer; it clearly indicates the activities and functions he/she will carry out in the mission, the moments of formation and rest, the contact people. Certain basic standards of living in the mission are established there too;
- an **agreement between the volunteer and the Province** that sends him/her, indicating their status as volunteer and assuming the responsibilities and risks of such an option. Such an agreement must be ratified legally under local law⁷;
- **authorisation of parents**, particularly considering the diversity of legislation;
- a clearly explained, accepted and undersigned **Code of Conduct**. In it the subject of the protection of the minors must appear; respect and emotional maturity in relation to lay collaborators and beneficiaries, criteria on the use of mission resources (means of transport, etc.) must be included too; acceptable forms of behaviour in the culture in which they are integrated and the reasons for which, at the initiative of the receiving community, the volunteer service could be concluded. In their formation process, the volunteers must study the Code of Conduct of the Province that sends them and of the one that hosts them;
- a Code of Conduct on the **Protection of Minors** must also be signed according to the legislation of each country.

4.2. ECONOMIC AND LOGISTICAL ASPECTS

- [150]
- An important principle is that the SMV is both collaborator and recipient of the mission at the same time, who deserves attention and material and spiritual care.

⁷ This can avoid unpleasant conflicts, such as possible labor demands, institutional responsibilities in case of accident or health, etc.

- Another important principle is that a fully subsidised⁸ volunteer does not help to create dynamics of obligation, generosity, sacrifice and participation. For this reason and depending on the cases, **the costs of volunteering** will have to be shared between the sending community, the receiving community and the volunteer him/herself. Everyone should give their share generously.
- Complete **standardisation** between the local SMV and external volunteer is necessary. Both receive the same treatment and the same maintenance contributions.
- The lifestyle of the missionary volunteer is marked by **simplicity and austerity**, so that everything that is superfluous should be avoided in the context where he/she finds him/herself, giving a witness of communion of life with the people where the volunteering is lived out.
- **Health insurance** is the responsibility of the sending community. It is important to clarify how to implement it in case of need (identified assistance places, methods, etc.), particularly in countries with health problems.
- **Documentation, visas**, are the responsibility of the sending community and/or the volunteer.
- The **travel costs** to the place where the service is offered is taken on by the sending community and/or the volunteer.
- **Internal transportation costs** due to the mission's service are expected to be covered by the host community.

[151]

⁸ When the volunteering ends or becomes impracticable because of the cut of government subsidies, it must be analyzed if it was really a true volunteer. Government aid for volunteers is a great opportunity to empower them, but they cannot create excessive dependence, nor should they kill their spirit, which springs from the spontaneous, free and generous civil organisation to respond in solidarity to the needs of others with their own media. A dynamic of self-sustainability of volunteering implies the logical capacity of commitment and motivation of the local Christian and civil communities, which assume and send volunteers, making volunteering much more communal, ecclesial and co-responsible. It is not just a "I want to go" but a community that sends and represents and is accountable for the mission.

- The host community assumes the expenses of **food and lodging, ordinary health care** and other normal ordinary expenses, as if the volunteer was an additional Salesian in the community⁹.
- On **regular monetary expenses**, the local SMV directory will set the reasonable amount according to the reality of the local communities.
- In the event that a missionary volunteer receives any money for a social project or service on the project, or a grant, he/she must put it into the **common cash fund of the volunteers** for the expenses of the volunteer community or be handed over to the Salesian Rector of the host community. If necessary, this practice should be legally implemented.
- Volunteers not coming from the SMV or young people performing the civil service, or cultural exchange may, if they wish, pool their support grants, entering into the dynamic of the SMV.
- **Formation costs** such as retreats, community experiences, training of SMV are the responsibility of the host community. This particularly concerns the national or regional SMV meetings.
- The **accommodation of the volunteers** in the Salesian community cannot be improvised and will vary depending on the profile of the volunteer (man, woman, single, married couple, with or without children), number of volunteers, vocational process of the volunteer, etc. The Provincial and the local Rector and his council shall offer the necessary conditions.
- Regarding **accommodation**, consider the sensitive and prudent reception of volunteers, carefully taking into account the identity of the religious community and public witness.

⁹ It is fair and as a form of real participation of the local community that welcomes, that they assume some expenses of the volunteers. Such generosity and delicacy is an expression that SMV are expected, loved and accepted as lay co-responsible for the mission. It is regrettable that certain "fees" that volunteers must pay to serve the community. It is true that there may be communities living in extreme poverty and indigence. In these particular cases the sending community can provide, by mutual agreement, an economic aid to the community that receives in anticipation of the maintenance of volunteers. But this should not become an economic opportunism, which instrumentalises the reception of volunteers by economic interests, distorting the value and meaning of the presence of lay collaborators in the mission.

[152]

OPERATIVE CRITERIA AND STANDARDS

- All SMV, local and foreign, must be treated with the same care and attention.
- The sending Province, in agreement with the volunteer, assumes travel expenses, medical insurance and documentation.
- The host community assumes the expenses of lodging, food and ordinary subsidies.
- The host community takes care of the formation of their SMV, sending them to the previously scheduled national or provincial meetings.
- The SMV money for some projects or services will be entered into the volunteers' common fund or delivered to the Rector of the Salesian community.
- The SMV is offered decent accommodation that respects their dignity and their living is marked by sensitivity, according to one's personal characteristics.
- Volunteers from the SMV are received with a paternal welcome and a balanced prudence into the Salesian community, with the form of accommodation proper to the Religious Life.
- An agreement between the Province that receives and the Province that sends the volunteer is made, clarifying the functions and services that the volunteer will carry out, as well as their corresponding rights and duties.
- At the local level, a legal agreement is completed between the sending Province and the volunteer that is sent.
- An SMV Code of Conduct is provided for volunteers. Overseas volunteers must receive it before coming to the country or province of destination.



Animation of SMV at inter-provincial and world level

5.1. REGIONAL OR NATIONAL ANIMATION

[153] Provincial leaders of the SMV of a nation or a group of provinces should seek to agree a common plan, unifying criteria and collaborating in the formation of SMV, sharing information, subsidies, itineraries, experiences and good practices.

It is very useful to create a **database** of former volunteers and volunteers on mission, to highlight the supply and demand of places where volunteering can be carried out, indicating the competencies and profiles required.

At regional or national level, missionary congresses, inter-provincial meetings on volunteering, an exchange of volunteers in the same region and even a mutual sending of them, can be organised.

This activity can be **coordinated** by a Salesian designated by the conference of the Provinces or Region, or the Regional Coordinator of Missionary Animation (**RCMA**).

5.2. WORLD LEVEL ANIMATION

[154] The promotion and animation of volunteering at the level of the Congregation is a shared responsibility between the Department for Youth Ministry and the Department for the Missions. The two departments make available their respective named contact person.

The missions department designates an **administrator for the coordination and animation of Salesian Missionary Volunteering**. Such an administrator will be at the service of the various provincial voluntary

The promotion and animation of volunteering at the Level of the Congregation is a shared responsibility between the Department for Youth Ministry and the Department for Missions

organisations that identify themselves in the Salesian Missionary Volunteer Service and want to collaborate in carrying out their mission.

[155] The administrator has the following tasks:

- follows the **development of the Salesian voluntary service**, in its various forms, especially SMV;
- helps the Provinces to have a **natural relationship** between volunteering, youth ministry and missionary animation;
- helps the Provinces to know and apply the present **document** on the SMV and other orientations of the Congregation in relation to volunteering in the Salesian mission;
- encourages **reflection** and **study** on volunteering in the Provinces;
- **coordinates** the various realities and organisations in the Provinces and Regions and the Salesian NGOs that promote volunteering;
- takes special care of the quality of volunteer **formation** proposals;
- encourages the creation of a **database** of the Congregation, collecting data about both volunteers and volunteer placements;
- promotes volunteering with particular attention to other countries;
- encourages each Province to have its own **local SMV** organisation;
- encourages the Regions or group of Provinces to **coordinate initiatives** in favour of volunteering (formation, sending, exchange);
- seeks **economic support** for the promotion of volunteering, through appropriate projects;
- gives visibility and interacts with **Social Communication**, to highlight the good practices in volunteering, its challenges, its achievements, its consequences in the different contexts, in order to promote it;
- serves as a "**bridge**" between the Provinces that prepare volunteers and the provinces prepared to host them;
- interacts with other ecclesial and civil voluntary organisations in the international arena.

CONCLUSION

[156] This handbook on 'Identity and Orientation of Salesian Missionary Volunteering' offers a reading of the current situation of volunteering, including concepts, experiences, methodologies, to better understand and implement SMV in the Salesian mission. It provides the reader with various pastoral, theological and Salesian reflections that motivate its importance and beauty for our faith and charism. Pedagogically, it presents processes, formation and accompaniment paths for volunteering, as well as practical forms of organisation.

[157] However, this document is more than an educational-pastoral resource; it aims to be an **encouragement to salesian youth holiness**. It represents an invitation for our young people to carry out an intense Christian life in the generous giving of themselves. It is a proposal that provokes and challenges us to live the high degree of Christian life.

How many young people in our Salesian spirituality confirm that it is possible and worthwhile to give our lives for others? Blessed Zeferino Namuncurá chose the phrase "I want to study to be useful to my people." A simple but challenging slogan for a world marked by individualism and the search for personal success. Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, committed to the social problems of his time, urged us to "live and not just 'get along'." The testimony of a young volunteer in Africa, Salesian cooperator, Sean Devereux, who died in Somalia while carrying out his humanitarian work, is also a strong one. The young Salesian past pupil, Akash Bashir, prevented a suicide bomber from entering a crowded Catholic Church in Lahore, Pakistan, sacrificing his life to avoid a large-scale carnage in the place of worship, literally shows what it means to sacrifice one's life for others.

In addition, thousands of young people in our social settings, oratories, youth centres, parishes, missions, schools, generously and cheerfully offer their lives in the service of other young people.

[158] Pope Francis tells us "Life is worth living; but to 'live it well' it is necessary to 'set their life aflame' in service, in proclaiming, and in going forth. This is the joy of the Announcement of the Gospel"¹.

How many young people find in missionary volunteer work a way of serving the 'least' of our brothers and sisters (cf. Mt 25:40), promoting human dignity and witnessing to the joy of love and of being Christians! These ecclesial experiences educate and train young people not only for professional success, but also for developing and fostering their God-given gifts in order to better serve others. These praiseworthy forms of temporary missionary service are a fruitful beginning, and, through vocational discernment, they can help you to decide to make a complete gift of yourselves as missionaries².

May the present document be an instrument to rekindle the missionary spirit and the apostolic zeal of the young people of our youth ministry, in our homes and to ourselves as educators and pastors.

¹ FRANCIS, *Homily in Santa Marta* (Vatican 10/05/2016).

² FRANCIS, *Message of Holy Father Francis for World Mission Day 2018* (Vatican 19/05/2018).

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