



SMV

Salesian Missionary Volunteering News Update

Volume 11 Newsletter



VMS



What a wonderful year for volunteering!

December 2025

Dear friends of SMV,

It was so wonderful to see so many familiar and new faces at our recent online formation session that discussed building relationships with Salesian communities. It is really important that we offer practical sessions that relate to the work you are doing in volunteering that can enrich your work. Thanks to all who attended and shared their experiences.

Recently the Provincial Delegates for Missionary Animation met in Valdocco to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the first missionary sending. Volunteering was a theme that arose multiple times during the meeting. It is clear the the volunteering is a profound option for our young people to have a missionary experience. We celebrate all Salesian missionaries, past and present for their commitment and we give thanks for the many volunteers who have made significant contributions in worldwide Salesian communities. Let us continue to nurture our Salesian Missionary Spirit!

WITH LOVE Marco, Pavel, Francisco, Chris, JC, Adam and Lauren

Upwards: Pier Giorgio Frassati - a model for Salesian Missionary Volunteers

Recently SMV Advisory Team member, JC, published a beautiful article that reflected on recently canonised Pier Giorgio Frassati. JC writes: "Frassati believed that faith must move. "Charity is not enough; we need social reform," he once said, a simple line that revealed a strong conviction. Love must act.". We invite you to [read the article](#) in its entirety that discusses Frassati as a model for volunteers.

Malta Erasmus Research in Volunteering and SDG's

Recently our friends in Malta conducted a project with substantial research about increasing civil engagement and participation of young people/youth organisations in development work. They have some excellent research that can be [accessed here](#) about the motivations of young people and volunteering.

Problems and Challenges What can we do?

Recently some of our team members had a very important discussion with some of our volunteer coordinators. One posed a very challenging, yet important question 'why don't we talk about some of the serious problems our volunteers face?'.

It is true, we need to be able to openly discuss and share some of serious, and in the worse case, traumatic experiences our volunteers can face.

We will ensure that in our formation sessions and meetings that we have open and honest dialogue about both the challenges, and joys found in volunteering.

We are here to support and help you in our capacity as an advisory team. We are not here to solve the problems but we are here to advise and listen. If you are ever experiencing a problem and would like to meet with some members of our team to problems solve and discuss potential solutions please let us know.

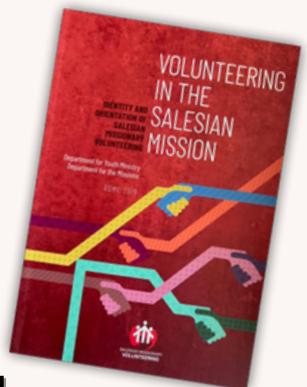
One thing we know for sure is that problems are usually not unique and we may have experience, or know someone that does in a similar situation that can provide advice.

SMV Manual Reflection

By Adam Rudin

SMV Volunteer Manual - Building Relationships

Relationship is at the heart of our Salesian spirituality. Therefore it makes sense that relationship is also at the heart of the Salesian Missionary Volunteer experience. Living and working together with a common mission and goal is a special kind of relationship that requires attention and care. Adam shares a beautiful reflection about his experience with volunteering and as a volunteer coordinator.



Reflection:

Building Relationships Between Sending and Receiving Communities

As I arrived at Chicago's O'Hare airport, I said a quick good-bye to my parents and siblings who brought me there to see me off (and, I suspect, to make sure I didn't miss my flight!). It was my first time traveling to another country, but I felt confident that this was where God was calling me—to serve with the Salesians at a rural school in Bolivia. As I sat on the plane, I reflected on how blessed I was to have the support of my family, but also how much I would miss them during my time of service.

When I arrived at my mission site, I was warmly greeted by the director and the five Salesian Sisters who lived there. Over the next two years, our relationships deepened until I realized that — while I still missed my family at home — I had found another family on mission. We celebrated birthdays, feast days, national holidays (both Bolivian and American!), and supported each other through the ups and downs of daily life.

Fast-forward almost twenty-five years. When I think back to my time as a Salesian Missionary Volunteer, I certainly remember the children I served, the communities I visited, and the countless soccer games played. Yet what stands out most vividly is the community of Salesians who received me into their home and treated me as one of their own. I was blessed to be placed in such a welcoming community that lived the true spirit of Don Bosco — "home, school, parish, and playground." To this day, I remain in contact with several of those Sisters. Our friendship continues to remind me that mission is not merely a task we complete but a relationship we enter into.

Looking back, I also recognize the importance of my sending community. Just as my family surrounded me with encouragement and prayer, my sending organization accompanied me through formation, preparation, and ongoing support. They were the bridge between home and mission, helping me carry the love I received into the community that awaited me. When sending and receiving communities work together — sharing insights, expectations, and accompaniment—the volunteer thrives. The stronger their partnership, the more fruitful and joy-filled the experience becomes for everyone.

Now, serving as the director of the SMV program in our province, I see more clearly than ever how central these relationships are. A healthy connection between sending and receiving communities ensures that volunteers are not left to navigate their mission alone. When both sides communicate openly and see themselves as partners in the same mission, volunteers experience consistency of care, clear direction, and a deeper sense of belonging.

The Salesian Missionary Volunteer Manual reminds us that "true accompaniment takes place within community." That accompaniment begins even before a volunteer departs — through prayer, formation, and dialogue shared between the two communities. This "home" experience allows volunteers to be transformed interiorly and to discover Christ present among the young and the poor.

Don Bosco often said, "It is not enough to love the young; they must know that they are loved." The same applies to our volunteers: they must know they are welcomed, valued, and loved. When sending and receiving communities act as two hands of the same mission — each supporting the other — the volunteer experience becomes a genuine encounter with God and a living expression of Salesian family spirit.

Adam Rudin serves as the Director of the Salesian Lay Missioner (SLM) program for the Salesians of Don Bosco SUE province of the United States and Canada. He is a member of the Salesian Missionary Volunteer (SMV) Advisory Team and has been involved in promoting and accompanying Salesian missionary volunteering at the congregational level. A former volunteer himself, Adam brings more than twenty years of experience in formation, accompaniment, and mission animation within the Salesian family.