



SMV

Salesian Missionary Volunteering

News Update

Volume 12 Newsletter



VMS



Why is SMV important?

February 2026

Dear friends of SMV,

Wishing all our collaborators and friends a Happy New Year!

It is great to be part of the whatsapp group and read a constant stream of news about SMV throughout the Salesian world. If you are not on the Whatsapp chat and would like to be, please let us know and we will add you! Thank you to those who do wonderful work in SMV and for sharing it with us.

We are really fortunate that Fr. Fabio, our Rector Major has taken some time to reflect on why SMV is important in the Salesian congregation. His reflection is below. Fr. Fabio knows and understands volunteering very well, particularly from his experiences as Councillor for Youth Ministry. Thanks for sharing Fr. Fabio.

Finally, Fr. Francisco Cervantes will leave our team and the youth ministry sector of the congregation as he has been appointed Provincial of Guadalajara, Mexico (MEG) Province. Congratulations Fr. Francisco and we wish you well in your new role.

Many blessings to each and every one of you!

♥ WITH LOVE ♥

Marco, Pavel, Chris, JC, Adam and Lauren

Website: Volunteer photos requested

Adam continues to work hard on the SMV website and is always working on keeping it updated and adding new information. We encourage you to regularly visit the website and provide any feedback.

We are also asking if you have any photos of volunteers in the field that we can use on our website and in our publications. Please Send them through to the Salesianvol@sdb.org email – thanks in advance!

Building Relationships Online Formation

In November it was great that a number of Volunteer Coordinators and those working in the field of SMV met online to listen to presentations and discuss the very important topic of building relationships with Salesian communities receiving volunteers.

An extensive article about the gathering can be found [here](#).

We only really scratched the surface in our discussion of this very important topic and it will continue to be a focal point as we move forward. We know very well that relationship was key for Don Bosco in every aspect of his work and life. If we can continue to place relationship at the centre of our SMV then we have the greatest chance for success and growth.

An enriching aspect of this session, and other ones that have taken place, is that every person who attended has such vast experience. It really is a meeting of "experts" in the field of SMV. We encourage you to continue to attend these sessions (held twice per year) not only so you can learn but so we can learn from you!

Please let us know if there are any topics that you would like covered in one of our formation sessions!

The SMV Advisory Team can be contacted via email: SalesianVol@sdb.org
Our Website: <https://salesianvol.org>

SMV and the SMV Advisory Team is a joint initiative of the Missions and Youth Ministry Sectors of the Salesians of Don Bosco

SMV Manual Reflection

By Fr. Fabio Attard sdb

SMV Volunteer Manual – Why is SMV Important?

Fr. Fabio provides a reflection for us that outlines why SMV is important within the Salesian congregation and Salesian family. He discusses the evolution of SMV in the congregation the fundamental connection of volunteering to the missionary call of each and every person.



Reflection:

The Importance of Salesian Missionary Volunteering

We have just celebrated the 150th anniversary of the first missionary expedition sent by Don Bosco. Although Don Bosco himself did not embark on a formal missionary journey *ad gentes*, his missionary heart and pastoral creativity laid the spiritual basis for the Salesian missions. Prompted by this missionary zeal, Salesian Missionary volunteering has emerged as a distinctive and evolving expression of the Salesian charism within the global mission of the Church.

From the very beginning, Don Bosco dreamed of a mission that went beyond borders including those who did not form part of ordained ministry and consecrated life. While he sent Salesian missionaries *ad gentes*, he also believed profoundly that the mission of salvation and education was too vast to be carried by Salesians alone. The laity, families, benefactors, and above all young people themselves were always part of his vision. In this sense, Salesian Missionary Volunteering is the way we today respond to contemporary needs; it is a faithful unfolding of Don Bosco's original charism.

The Congregation's reflection on volunteering, which gradually matured through the General Chapters shows a growing awareness of this reality. What began as a recognition of lay participation in missionary renewal has evolved into a rich and articulated understanding of volunteering as a formative, ecclesial, and missionary path. The emergence of the term "Salesian Missionary Volunteering" signals this maturation: volunteering is not merely social service inspired by Salesian values, but a missionary experience rooted in faith, accompaniment, and shared responsibility for the Salesian mission. The same takes a structural form in *Voluntary Service in the Salesian Mission: Handbook and Guidelines* (2008), *Salesian Youth Ministry: Frame of Reference* (2014) and *Volunteering in the Salesian Mission* (2019)). Salesian Missionary Volunteering is a service of solidarity, freely offered, integrated into the educational and pastoral projects of a Salesian presence, motivated by faith and practiced according to the pedagogy and spirituality of Don Bosco.

At its heart, Salesian Missionary Volunteering in the Congregation is a school of life and faith. It allows young people to encounter the world's peripheries, not as spectators, but as companions, sharing daily life with communities marked by poverty, vulnerability, yet offering signs of hope. In doing so, volunteers are evangelised as much as they evangelise. This reciprocity is deeply Salesian: education and evangelisation happen through relationships, presence, and shared life. The volunteer learns to see reality with new eyes, to listen, to serve humbly, and to recognise God already at work in the lives of the people one meets.

The missionaries Don Bosco sent to Patagonia were young, generous, while being open to the novelty that awaited them. They were sustained by trust, obedience, and a burning apostolic zeal. Today's volunteers share something of that same spirit. Whether serving locally or internationally, for short or long periods, they embody a contemporary form of missionary availability. Their presence reminds the Congregation that the missionary dimension is not reserved for a few specialists, but belongs to the whole Salesian Family.

Salesian Missionary Volunteering also plays a crucial role in vocational discernment. Many volunteers discover, through service and community life, deeper questions about their future, their values, and their relationship with God. For some, this journey leads to religious or priestly life; for others, to marriage, professional commitment, or long-term engagement in social and ecclesial service. In every case, volunteering fosters vocational maturity, helping young people integrate faith, life, and responsibility. This dynamic fruitfulness confirms that volunteering is not a "pause" in life, but a powerful formative experience that shapes committed Christians and honest citizens according to the mind and heart of Don Bosco. Let us hope that many young people may discover in Salesian Missionary Volunteer Service, a path of faith, maturity, and joyful commitment to the Salesian mission.

Fr. Fabio Attard sdb has been Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco since March 2025. Originally from Malta, Fr. Fabio's missionary spirit emerged early in his Salesian life and he helped establish the Salesian presence in Tunisia. Later, as Councillor for Youth Ministry, he strongly promoted volunteering and was a key driver in drafting the Salesian Missionary Volunteering (SMV) manual, shaping volunteering as a core expression of Salesian service to young people.