

# Salesian Missionary Volunteering News Update

Volume 14 Newsletter



SMV



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## SMV: Voices of Hope Throughout the World

June 2026

Dear friends of SMV,

Recently we had opportunity to meet online with many of you for our online formation sessions. There is a genuine universality to the Salesians and our SMV family. During the two meetings, one in English and one in Spanish, the global Salesian family was represented from many different countries in the world. What a blessing!

We know very well the power of SMV for the volunteer themselves and also for the community that receives them. When we come together and with someone that is “other”, someone that is different from ourselves, we provide message of hope in a world that tells us to fear the “other” and most importantly it is a manifestation of the body of Christ!

We are deeply grateful for SMV and send you many blessings!

 *Marco, Pavel, Chris, JC, Adam, Carlos and Lauren*

### PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH WELL BEING

A big thanks to Antonella Sinagoga from the Youth Ministry sector who joined us for our online formation. We began the very important discussion about ensuring psychological and mental health well being for both ourselves and our volunteers. During the session we acknowledged that this is only the beginning of the discussion and want to bring greater focus to this very important topic, particularly during our next in person meeting. If there are any particular subtopics or resources you would like, please let us know so we can integrate them in our planning.

If you were unable to attend or would like to review Antonella's presentation, email: [salesianvol@sdb.org](mailto:salesianvol@sdb.org) and we will send it to you.

## New Volunteer Experience Colle Don Bosco

An exciting new volunteer initiative exists for the opportunity to volunteer at Colle Don Bosco.

Colle Don Bosco, the birthplace of our beloved Don Bosco, is one of the most significant spiritual and historical centers of the Salesian world. Located in the hills of northern Italy, it serves as a global center of pilgrimage, formation, and encounter for young people and members of the Salesian Family.

The International Youth Volunteer Community offers a deeply immersive experience of living the Salesian charism at its source. Volunteers serve in a dynamic environment that combines hospitality, youth ministry, and intentional formation. The site welcomes pilgrims and groups year-round, inviting them to encounter the life and spirituality of Don Bosco in the very places where his mission began.

You can learn more about this exciting volunteering opportunity at the [Salesianvol website](https://salesianvol.org). The website also has the contact details of those responsible.

The SMV Advisory Team can be contacted via email: [SalesianVol@sdb.org](mailto: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. Pavel Ženíšek



## SMV Volunteer Manual – Salesians and Lay People – Real Partners

In this edition Fr. Pavel reflects on the important shared mission between Religious and Laity. Volunteering is a unique and beautiful expression of this shared mission. Fr. Pavel discusses how to view this collaborative relationship.

## Reflection:

### Salesians and Lay People – Real Partners

I believe that today, within our Salesian Family, no one seriously questions the importance of collaboration between consecrated Salesians and lay people. The real challenge arises when we begin to discuss what that collaboration should actually look like.

From my experience of accompanying young missionaries from many countries, I too often encounter a conception of lay people merely as helpers or executors – filling in where Salesians no longer have the numbers or the strength. Don Bosco, however, had a very different vision. From the very beginning of his work, religious and lay people were genuine partners in a shared mission for the good of young people.

This was not an afterthought. When Don Bosco wrote his first Salesian Constitutions, he included not only a section for religious, but an equally important section for co-workers – lay collaborators as a fixed part of the congregation he was founding. The Vatican dicastery judged this too radical and rejected it. A revised version, with co-workers demoted to an appendix, was rejected again. Only the third version – without any mention of lay collaborators – was finally approved in 1874.

This is deeply telling. Don Bosco's original intention was clear: the laity were from the beginning bearers of the Salesian charism. Looking at the chronology: lay people came first. Before the Congregation existed, there was a charismatic founder surrounded by helpers and companions – some diocesan priests, but above all lay people: Mamma Margherita, friends, benefactors. The Salesians came later.

It is therefore painful to hear some confreres argue that lay people are only needed where there are no vocations, or that involving them in responsibility is actually the reason vocations have declined. This is both instrumentalized thinking and a betrayal of Don Bosco's vision. We SDBs cannot appropriate the Salesian mission as exclusively our own. We were invited to take part in it, as many lay people were before us. We share one mission – with different gifts and different ecclesial roles – but not a superior one.

The documents of the General Chapters confirm this. GC27 stated plainly: "The shared mission between Salesians and lay people is no longer an optional extra – if anyone still thinks so – because the Salesian mission in today's world is insistently asking us for it."

This is the vision I invite you, as coordinators of Salesian volunteering – some of you consecrated Salesians, others lay people – to keep at the centre of your work. You yourselves are a living sign of what this partnership can look like. Walk together, listen to one another, and genuinely try to see through each other's eyes: the religious through the eyes of the lay person rooted in family, work and the world; the lay person through the eyes of the one who has given his life entirely to God and to young people. This mutual listening and willingness to be changed by the other's perspective is not a soft ideal – it is what makes the mission richer, more credible, and more faithful to Don Bosco's original intention.

Pavel Ženíšek – is a Salesian priest from the Czech Republic, currently working in Missionary Animation in the Missions Sector of the General House, Rome. He has missionary experience in India and Bangladesh, and as Director of SADBA he also served as volunteer coordinator for five years. He has been a member of the SMV Advisory Team since its inception.