



SMV

Salesian Missionary Volunteering News Update

Volume 15 Newsletter



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SMV: Beyond Service, a School for Life

August 2026

Dear friends of SMV,

Greetings to you all! Some of you will be enjoying a warm summer while others in the southern hemisphere will be trying to keep warm! Wherever you may be, we hope you are well!

There is lots of news in this edition of our SMV newsletter. Included is also a beautiful reflection from Fr. Carlos, the newest member of the SMV Advisory Team, reflecting on volunteering as a 'School for Life'. Those of us who are involved in SMV know this reality well and have seen this special school in action!

Please keep in touch with your news. There is so much happening in the world of SMV and we are grateful for your role and commitment!

Sending you many blessings,

♥ WITH LOVE ♥ *Marco, Pavel, Chris, JC, Adam, Carlos and Lauren*

SMV VOLUNTEER MANUAL

This is a friendly reminder that we have both electronic and hard copies of the SMV Volunteer Manual. This publication is an excellent resource to help guide your work and animate volunteering within your program and province. If you would a copy, please email: salesianvol@sdb.org.

SAVE THE DATE - 2027 SMV WORLD MEETING

We are pleased to announce the next SMV World Meeting:

October 17 - 22, 2027 in Madrid

The first meeting was held in Rome in 2024. It was a wonderful event that brought SMV coordinators and others involved in SMV from around world!

Stay tuned for further details in coming months!

Website:

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

We want to slowly build the resource section of our website. There will be a focus on best practices from SMV organisations. Sharing of these resources will help Provinces that are in their infancy with SMV and will also be a good resource for existing programs to further improve their processes.

In future newsletters we will begin to ask for different resources, if you are happy for them to be shared on the website. As a reminder, the resources can only be accessed through logging in and are not available for the general public.

The first request is if you can please send us any documents that are related to:

Agreements with the Receiving Community

This can include:

- Contracts with the receiving community
- Expectations
- Volunteer job description proforma

We thank you in advance!

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

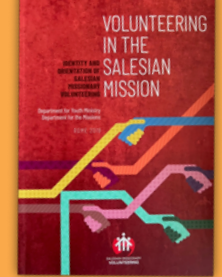
SMV and the SMV Advisory Team is a joint initiative of the Missions and Youth Ministry Sectors of the Salesians of Don Bosco

SMV Manual Reflection

By Fr. Carlos Méndez sdb

SMV Volunteer Manual – Beyond Service, a School for Life

In this edition, the newest member of the SMV Advisory Team, Fr Carlos, reflects on the life long educative nature of volunteering. The experience is not simply a moment in time, however, as Fr. Carlos explains has a transformative power that can change a volunteers perspective on life.



Reflection: SMV – Beyond Service, a School for Life

Although many people say that “life is the best school” to highlight the lessons that emerge from lived experience, this expression tends to emphasize the spontaneous nature of learning. It is through the very act of living that we acquire resources, develop responses, and gradually adapt ourselves to the reality that surrounds us. By contrast, the expression “school of life” directs our attention to a more intentional, conscious, and reflective dimension of experience. It is not simply a matter of living through events, but of pausing to reflect on them, interpreting them, and recognizing their formative value. From this perspective, an experience becomes a true school when it is embraced, analyzed, and evaluated, enabling meaningful learning that can illuminate future situations and provide resources for personal and community growth.

Among the many and varied Salesian experiences, one that we have come to recognize as a genuine “school of life for young people” is the Salesian Missionary Volunteering (SMV). It is an experience of long-term service in which individuals freely and generously offer their lives, time, and resources for the benefit of those most in need. Over the years, Salesian reflection on Youth Ministry and Missionary Animation has helped identify gradual experiences of service and apostolic commitment that enable young people to integrate faith and life in a personal way. It would be contradictory to think that faith, the discovery of God in one’s life, or, in Salesian terms, friendship with Jesus, should have no concrete impact on daily living. For this reason, these processes are intentionally proposed in order to foster the integration, within one’s own life, of those deep convictions that guide our choices and actions (cf. Framework for Salesian Youth Ministry, 140).

SMV stands out for its educational and evangelizing dimension. As a true school of life, it gives priority to the educational and pastoral processes of both the volunteer and the beneficiaries of the mission. In this sense, we do not view volunteering merely as a “nice” experience that can be offered to anyone, but rather as an authentic formative journey that enriches the lives of those who are called to bear witness to their faith through generous service (cf. Volunteering in the Salesian Mission, 92). At the heart of this proposal lies the integration of educational and theological elements. Growth, therefore, implies harmonizing the process of human maturity with the Christian meaning of life, within a shared journey of faith and development (cf. Framework for Salesian Youth Ministry, 145).

The SMV proposal is not limited to a service rendered to others. Rather, it is above all a genuine school of life because it offers holistic paths that take shape through personalized accompaniment. In this way, SMV becomes:

- a school of encounter, teaching us to step outside ourselves and open our hearts to others;
- a school of humanity, enabling us to discover the dignity of every person;
- a school of faith, where we experience the Gospel through daily life with the brothers and sisters God has entrusted to us;
- a school of service, helping us build a bridge between the theoretical discourse of doing good and the concrete practice of goodness;
- a school of communication, where we learn to share with others and foster co-responsibility;
- a school of global citizenship, through which we learn to appreciate and understand the social and cultural realities of today’s world;
- a school of vocational discernment, helping us gain clarity in interpreting the call we have received from God.

Like every school, the process of accompanying volunteers is marked by formative pathways that include gradual experiences of service, which progressively shape a heart dedicated to the mission. Many of our Salesian works and Provinces promote experiences of Salesian Missionary Volunteering, recognizing the importance of cultivating values such as generosity, solidarity, adaptability, teamwork, intercultural dialogue, lived faith, and commitment to those most in need. The exchange of good practices in recent years, together with the witness of volunteers and Salesians, has led us to a deeper awareness that SMV is an experience that transforms both those who receive the service and those who provide it. In this way, it has become firmly established as a true school of life that fosters one of the fundamental characteristics of Salesian spirituality: a spirit of responsible service.

In a world that often promotes individualism and a lack of fraternity, let us renew our commitment to proposing and accompanying experiences of Missionary Volunteering that help young people integrate faith and life. Wherever a young person learns to serve with joy, responsibility, and generosity, there a volunteer is being formed—but also a missionary disciple, capable of transforming the world in the spirit of the Gospel.

Carlos Méndez: is a Salesian priest from Venezuela who currently works in the Youth Ministry Sector at the General House in Rome. Among his various experiences in pastoral animation and accompaniment in Venezuela, he also served as Director of a vocational training centre and as Provincial Coordinator of Social Works. In recent years, he has studied Social Communication with a pastoral focus. This year, he has joined the SMV Advisory Team.