Assessment and prospects of the 2nd RELAL Volunteering Congress

Following the **2nd Volunteering Congress of the Lasallian Region of Latin America (RELAL)**, which took place from 21 to 25 August in the city of Tabatinga, on the triple Amazonian border between Brazil, Colombia and Peru, the organisers and participants share their assessments and prospects.

Br Vinicio González, RELAL's secretary for mission and management states, "in addition to the possibility of planning, reflecting and offering spaces for formation, **one of the most significant elements of the Congress was the fact that gathered in one of the communities that receives volunteers**, which brought us into contact with the places where they carry out their evangelising mission".

Orlando Rojas, a Lasallian from the District of Bolivia-Peru, is one of the volunteer missionaries who is part of the Tabatinga community, for whom living the Lasallian charism in the Amazon is connected with "the path of learning in Lasallian environments" which led him to **"generously take on the service of the those most in need of this triple border".**

From the perspective of Jorge Mc Millán, who participated for the District of México Norte, "this gathering has been very enriching", as we had "the opportunity to establish common objectives and goals, and at the same time, to join in the vision of the Institute". "**To the extent that each of us contributes with the gifts God has given us, we can be leaven for a more fraternal world,"** he adds.

Similarly, María Elena Arias, from the District of Central America – Panama, thinks that **the most significant thing about this Congress has been "the reflection that has emerged from the contribution of each participant**" in order to "continue walking together, accompanying those who have placed their hearts, minds, gifts and talents at the service of others".

Participants of the 2nd Volunteering Congress of the RELAL

Commitments and challenges

One of the tasks left by the Congress is to **“prioritise the formation of volunteers”**, said Brother Vinicio, recognising the need to “continue to integrate Lasallian universities in the Region so that they can join in the current projects”.

It is also crucial to **“follow up on the Strategic Plan for Volunteer Ministry”**, which implies “a special accompaniment before, during and after, for those who enthusiastically embrace this experience”.

Finally, RELAL’s secretary for mission and management considers it vital “to connect with the processes that are being developed at the level of the Institute and to **offer our contribution from the path we have been following**“.

Responding to the cries of the Amazon

For his part, Brother Marco Antonio Salazar, from the District of Bolivia-Peru and in charge of the Lasallian volunteer community in Tabatinga, invited us to **“listen to the cries of the Amazon, of our ‘common home’ and of the people who**

live here, in order to respond, from our charism, to these needs".

"We believe that we can respond to these cries from our Lasallian educational heritage…", concludes Brother Marco, making an explicit appeal: **"Come to Tabatinga, we need your heart, your expertise**, to contribute to this mission and to these calls. We are waiting for you in the Amazon!