



The missionary reality of the Congregation is truly great and beautiful. The contexts and the circumstances in which we share our life and mission with different peoples and ethnic groups are very rich, but generally speaking, in my opinion, not much known. That is why I thought it would be very interesting to offer the following information to all the members of this Chapter Assembly.

Right now, the Congregation is present in 134 countries: 43 in Africa, 24 in America, 29 in Asia, 32 in Europe and 6 in Oceania. For the time being, our presence has been suspended in Yemen, where our confrere, Fr. Tom Uzhunnalil, was kidnapped for 557 days. We have closed our presence in two countries: Iran and Andorra. At the same time, we have established new presences in two other countries: Malaysia and Gambia. And we have received requests to open new communities in Afghanistan, Algeria, Guinea-Bissau, Kazakhstan, Iraq, Sweden, São Tomé and Príncipe, Somalia and Vanuatu.

### Particular religious contexts



✓ **The Islamic context:** The phenomenon of religious diversity and multicultural differences is increasingly transversal and not only geographically defined. Our presence in countries with a **Muslim majority** where Don Bosco's charism is at the service of young people as a witness to the Gospel and interreligious dialogue, is particularly concentrated in the Province of the Middle East (MOR) in an **Arab Muslim** context: Syria, Palestine and Egypt. In Lebanon and Israel our works have their own characteristics because of a significant Christian presence in the former and Jewish-Muslim in the latter. We may also recall our new presences in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates as well as in the countries of the Maghreb, Morocco and Tunisia. In **Asia**, we have presences with very different characteristics in Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Turkey. □ In the **Europe:** Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. □ In **African:** Burkina Faso, Chad, Gambia, Guinea Conakry, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Sudan.

✓ In the **Buddhist context:** Cambodia, China, Korea, Japan (with predominantly Buddhist and Shinto religions), Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Taiwan and Vietnam.

✓ In the **Christian Orthodox context:** Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine.

### Contexts of human mobility and migration



✓ **Refugees and internal immigrants (IDP - Internally Displaced People):** Apart from the transversality of this phenomenon which affects many nations, we are present in very significant places that involve the dramatic reality of refugees and immigrants within their own country. By way of examples: Burundi, Central Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Nigeria, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Syria, Sudan, South Sudan, Turkey, Ukraine and Uganda.

✓ The **migratory phenomenon** is enormous and differentiated, and is of such a magnitude that, in one way or another, the Congregation finds itself immersed in it to a large extent. As an example, I list some of the more significant presences, both as regards the places of departure and the places of destination where we work for migrants and displaced persons.

What I wanted to present to you, dear confreres, is a "photograph" of the beautiful missionary reality of our Congregation. Between those who continue this reality today and those who laid the foundation, we can count more than 10,400 Salesian missionaries *ad gentes*, starting from the first missionary expedition of Don Bosco in 1875 to the last one we have just witnessed, viz. the 150th. A number of times our Sisters, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, have left together with us, often in order to carry out a complementary missionary activity.

These missionaries, both men and women, by the grace of God and the action of the Spirit, have sowed and planted the Salesian charism of Don Bosco which has grown in the five continents.



Don Bosco too nourished the hope of becoming a missionary. That thought never left him. It was the great ideal he had, and he realized it through his sons and daughters. *We have certainly been missionaries* and "Don Bosco's successors, faithful to the spirit of the Founder, have always made a special effort with regard to the missionary activity of the Congregation." I can assure you that we too will continue to do so.

# From sweets to the missions



I was studying in the Salesian college in Canlubang (FIN) when I encountered Fr. George Schwarz, SDB, an elderly German missionary who was in-charge of the science laboratory of our school. I learned he was strict so I was afraid to approach him. One Sunday morning, as I was preparing to serve mass in the college chapel, I saw a pack of candies and chocolates flying towards my face. It hit directly on my nose. It was coming from Fr. George. Scratching my head, I looked at him. With a smile he told me: "Have some candies to make you sweet!" From that time on, I went to him for confessions,

served his masses, did many experiments in his laboratory and learned about his beautiful mission in China and in the Philippines. He inspired me to be a Salesian and later I prayed to be like him, a missionary!

I was a formator in the postnovitate when I personally handed my letter to Fr. Angel Fernandez, SDB. It was a long seven-year journey of discerning since I received an invitation during practical training.

There were many challenges along the journey even before I arrived in my destination. After the Christmas eve mass in the generalate in Pisana, I received the sad news that my father passed away. Like Don Bosco, Fr. Angel was there to console. Known to many Salesians, my father used to hear daily mass in the Salesian college chapel everyday since my formation years until the day before he died. Now his son-missionary has a prayer warrior in heaven.

In 2017, I arrived in the Province of Manaus without knowing any Portuguese, a big challenge for a neophyte. Thanks be to God, our provincial asked an elderly Salesian sister to tutor me in my first language immersion. To work in a remote city is another challenge since I grew up in big cities back home. Moreover, adjusting to the culture and manner of working was also tiring especially when many things seem incomprehensible.

Tiredness and homesickness goes to the background when we see students improving their behavior, when they share their growth experience in the Salesian youth center, when they became more participative in the parish and even when I am able to sit beside a student to listen to their challenges and difficulties. Looking at almost three years in the missions and putting God first, I saw myself becoming a better Salesian every day, maturing in my vocation, and growing in holiness even though the journey was not smooth.

To our young confreres who are feeling the call to be a missionary, do not be afraid to take a leap of faith because for sure God is always there to help and guide you. God blesses those who are "patient, patient and patient" to embrace a life of challenges and sacrifice for the young. <[jomarsdb@isma.org.br](mailto:jomarsdb@isma.org.br)>

*Jose Maria Vergara Castillo SDB , missionary from Philippines in Amazon - Brazil.*

## Witness of Salesian Missionary Sanctity

*Fr. Pierluigi Cameroni SDB, Postulator General for the Causes of Saints*

The Venerable Augustus Hlond (1881-1948), Salesian Cardinal and Primate of Poland, strong in his faith, just as he had defended the Polish people from the horrors of Nazism, so with pastoral vigour he continued to defend them from Communist atheism, doing his best to protect the oppressed, to resolve social questions, to comfort and help the breadless and homeless. In a pastoral letter of 1932 he wrote: "Catholics must therefore not only take part in elections, in order to send honest men of Catholic spirit to the legislative bodies, but it is still their duty to enter personally into the government, the House, the Senate, the political and municipal administration. They will not be there as official representatives of the Church, but as citizens and politicians who govern according to Catholic principles".

## For Catholics in Cina



## Salesian Missionary Intention

**That the Church in China may persevere in fidelity to the Gospel and grow in unity**

*The Salesians arrived in China in 1906. Despite difficulties, persecution and martyrdom, the Salesian Family became Chinese and continued its educational and evangelizing work. We pray that the Holy Spirit will enlighten and strengthen it.*

