

CAGLIERO

N. 138 - June 2020

Newsletter for Salesian Missionary Animation



Publication of the Missions Sector for the Salesian Communities and Friends of the Salesian Mission

Dear friends of the Salesian missions,

After the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus pandemic, the *Missions Sector* of the Salesian Headquarters in Rome, with the support of Don Bosco Network, organised last March 25, 2020, an online meeting for some sharing and strategic planning. Thanks to the untiring efforts of Fr. George Menampampil, the Coordinator of *Don Bosco Worldwide Solidarity Against COVID 19*, Salesian Mission Offices in all continents and the members of DBN, PPDO's and others are all networking and coordinating our initiatives to save human lives.

This emergency is already teaching us important missionary lessons. Above all, the pandemic pulled the curtain back on a hard truth: we have neither all the answers nor all the means needed. Perhaps we are not even asking the right questions to respond to an emergency. Hence, we cannot just be satisfied with the good we do. We need to coordinate with others to effectively help more people. This could be intimidating, but it is also inspiring and refreshing.

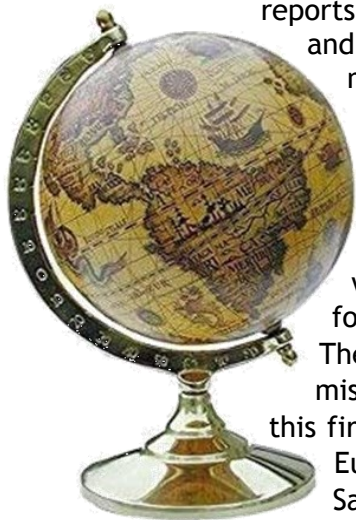
Now we realise that no one may even think 'this is how it's always been done'. The pandemic has forced us to change many of the ways it was always done. The pandemic is teaching us that one needs love, commitment, dedication and concern for human life in order to extend a helping-hand - even at the risk of contracting the virus ourselves - to the most abandoned, the forgotten, the ones that are not capable of asking for help.

This emergency reminds us that it takes *humility* to be able to collaborate with others as equal partners; It takes *imagination* and *creativity* to innovate solutions to emergency situations we never faced before; It takes *self-discipline* to ensure proper documentation, financial transparency and accountability of the help we received from our donors; It takes the *missionary spirit* to realise that crisis situations are fertile moments for initial proclamation even among agnostics and atheists; above all, it takes *faith* to remind ourselves that we launch all these initiatives as concrete expressions of our love for Jesus Christ, who assures us that, in the end, Life will triumph over death; God, not evil, will have the last word. Indeed, this month of the Sacred Heart, is a powerful reminder to live our lives in such a way that we reveal the Loving Heart of a Merciful God to the whole world!

Fr Alfred Maravilla SDB, Mission Councillor



The missionary ideal of Don Bosco, already alive in him by the end of his high school studies, developed and matured over time. At the end of his period of pastoral formation at the Boarding School of St. Francis of Assisi in Turin (1844), he thought of joining the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, who had opened a flourishing mission in Indochina (Vietnam). Don Cafasso directed him to his "missions" among the young people of Turin. His favourite readings were the missionary reports published in the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith. From 1848, Don Rua and others heard him exclaim several times: "Oh, if only I had many priests and many clerics, I would send them to evangelize Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego...". He was seen, in those same years, casting his eyes on some world map and trembling at the thought that "many regions still lay in the shadow of death". Then, after unspeakable sacrifices, he could finally launch his missions to Argentina (1875). "From then on", - writes Fr Albera, "the Missions were the core of his heart and it seemed he lived on only for them... He spoke of them with such enthusiasm, that one was amazed and greatly edified by his ardour for souls".



The Expeditions: Don Bosco received from many countries several requests for missionaries, but he decided to start with Argentina. Ten missionaries formed this first expedition on the 11th of November 1875. Not neglecting the expansion in Europe (France, Spain, Austria, Great Britain), there followed the arrival of the Salesians in Uruguay (1876), Brazil (1883), Chile (1887) and, three days before Don Bosco's death, in Ecuador (1888). Between 1875 and 2019 there have been 150

expeditions of 10,571 missionaries, sent forth from the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco, Turin.



“Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words”

My ardent wish to go to the missions was aroused by the *socius* in my novitiate, a Salesian missionary from Peru (Fr. Antonio Javier Barrientos). He often spoke to us about the missions and the need for Salesian missionaries in the world. This man made me read the lives of saints Mon. Luigi Versiglia and Callisto Caravario. Seeing what they did for China I became even more passionate about missionary life.

I guess that in every missionary’s life, the first challenges are those of the language, food, adaptation to the weather, etc.; but these are normal challenges that everyone needs to go through. The main challenge I faced was that I was not allowed to talk openly to young people about the Love of Jesus Christ. This is especially the case in our school because the majority of our students are Muslims. In giving talks, I have to choose my words carefully so as not to offend any of them.

Before I received my obedience to go to Kosovo/Albania, I was praying to God to send me anywhere in the world except Europe because of my racial prejudices. And what did God do? He landed me exactly where I did not want to go (that is the beauty of our God). Looking back at these past five years, my experience has made me appreciate and put into practice the words of saint Francis of Assisi, “Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words.” The healthy relationship I have with the local people, their trust in me and my happiness in being among them, are clear signs for me that God wants me here.

A final word to the young Salesians aspiring to be missionaries: To all my fellow young confreres out there, “Do you feel that God is calling you to be a missionary? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be dismayed for the LORD, your God, is with you wherever you go (cfr. Jsh 1,9). DON’T BE AFRAID to leave your comfort zones, go out there and be signs of God’s love to all people.

Cl. Don Nyika, Zambian, missionary in Kosovo



Witness of Salesian Missionary Sanctity

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



Blessed Alberto Marvelli (1918-1948), a former pupil of the Salesian Oratory in Rimini, wrote in a small notebook: “To serve is better than to be served. Jesus serves.” A lay Christian expresses his Christian faith specially through his political and social commitment, understood as service to the common good: “With the help of the Lord I wish and propose to be always an example to my companions and to defend my faith on every occasion without human respect, but with my mind always turned to the greater glory of God”. It is with this spirit of service that Alberto lived his civic commitment. He felt and lived his commitment in politics as a service to the organized community: political activity could and should become the highest expression of a lived faith. He was, as Don Bosco wanted, a good Christian and an honest citizen, committed to the Church and society with a Salesian heart.

For Missionary Groups



Salesian Missionary Intention

So that missionary groups of children, adolescents, youths and adults may develop in all our communities.

Missionary Animation is a transversal reality in all Salesian youth ministry and brings a fresh air of renewal. They promote pastoral, missionary and vocational commitment. We pray that missionary groups may flourish in our various Pastoral Educational Communities.

