



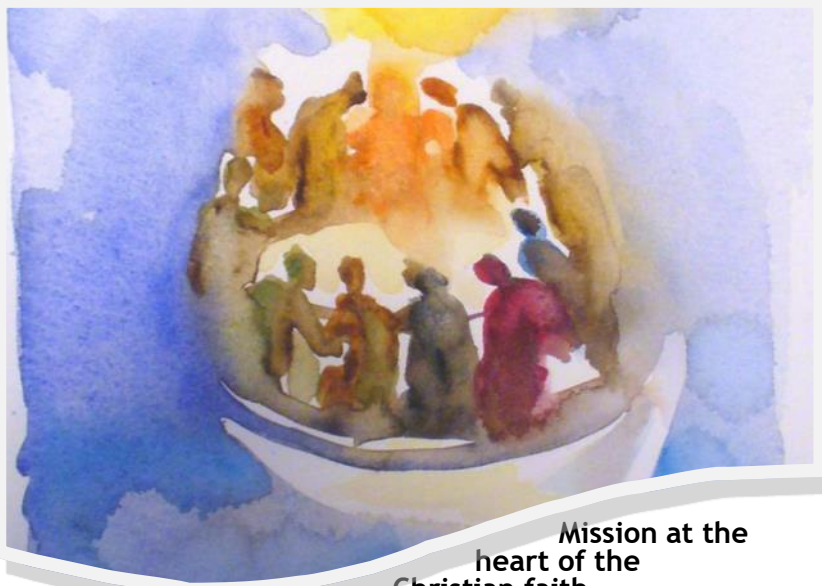
A Publication of the Missions Sector for the Salesian Communities and Friends of the Salesian Mission

October, missionary month par excellence! The whole Church stirs up and wakes up, recognizing once again its deep missionary roots. Pope Francis, through his message for the World Mission Day 2017, reminds us also of the synodal and youthful path that we are already going through together: "Young people are the hope of the mission. The person of Jesus and the good news proclaimed by him continue to fascinate many young people" (No. 8). We have just seen this fascination in Valdocco on the face of each of the young Salesians from around the world, members of the newly commissioned 148th Missionary Expedition. We have also admired it in many Provinces all over the world. We see the courage and enthusiasm of so many young people who give to God and to the world a generous part of their lives through the Salesian

Volunteer Movement. Our common missionary responsibility, Pope Francis concludes, needs the "rich imagination and creativity of young people" (No. 8). It is, indeed, the young who are renewing the missionary spirit in our houses and Provinces. May they keep us awake!

*J. Basanes*

D. Guillermo Basanes SDB  
Councillor for the Missions



### Mission at the heart of the Christian faith

In this missionary month of October we encourage you to study deeper the message from the Holy Father. For lack of space we share, just a few phrases:

"This Day invites us to reflect anew on the **mission at the heart of the Christian faith**. The Church is missionary by nature; otherwise, it would no longer be the Church of Christ, but one group among many others that would soon end up serving their purpose and passing away. So it is important to ask ourselves certain questions about our Christian identity and our responsibility as believers in a world marked by confusion, disappointment and frustration, and torn by numerous fratricidal wars that unjustly target the innocent. What is the *basis* of our mission? What is the *heart* of our mission? What are the *essential approaches* we need to take in carrying out our mission? [...]

The Church's mission, directed to all men and women of good will, is based on the transformative power of the Gospel. The Gospel is Good News filled with contagious joy, for it contains and offers new life: that of the Risen Christ who, by bestowing His life-giving Spirit, becomes for us the Way, the Truth and the Life (cf. Jn 14: 6). He is the *Way* that invites us to follow him with confidence and courage. In following Jesus as our Way, we experience *Truth* and receive His *Life*, which is fullness of communion with God the Fa-

ther in the power of the Holy Spirit. That life makes us free from every kind of selfishness and is a source of creativity in love.

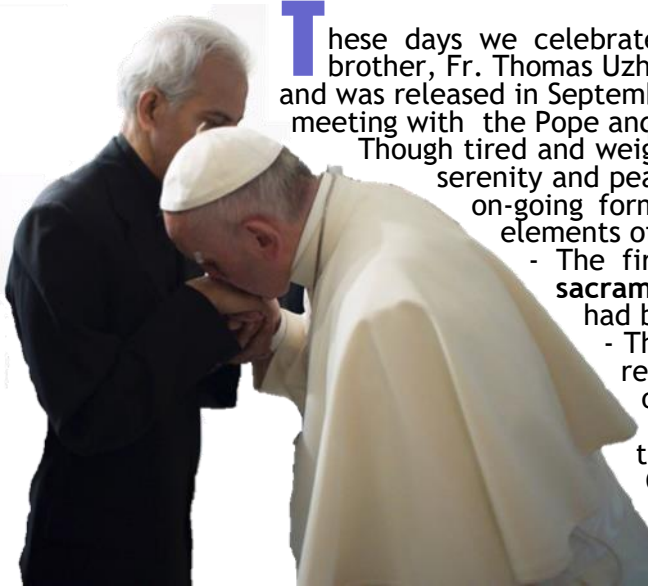
The Church's mission, then, is not to spread a religious ideology, much less to propose a lofty ethical teaching. Many movements throughout

the world inspire high ideals or ways to live a meaningful life. Through the mission of the Church, Jesus Christ himself continues to evangelize and act. Her mission thus makes present in history the *kairos*, the favourable time of salvation. Through the proclamation of the Gospel, the risen Jesus becomes our contemporary, so that those who welcome him with faith and love experience the transforming power of His Spirit, who makes humanity and creation fruitful even as the rain does with the earth [...]

Thank God, many significant experiences continue to testify to the transformative power of the Gospel. I think of the gesture of the Dinka student who, at the cost of his own life, protected a student from the enemy Nuer tribe who was about to be killed [...]. We can think too of countless **testimonies** to how the Gospel helps overcome narrowness, conflict, racism, tribalism, and to promote everywhere, and among all, reconciliation, fraternity and sharing [...]

**Young people** are the hope of the mission. The person of Jesus and the Good News He proclaimed continue to attract many young people. They seek ways to put themselves with courage and enthusiasm at the service of humanity. "There are many young people who offer their solidarity in the face of the evils of the world and engage in various forms of militancy and volunteering [...]. How beautiful it is to see that young people are 'street preachers', joyfully bringing Jesus to every street, every town square and every corner of the earth!"

# FR. THOMAS UZHUNNALIL TEACHES US APOSTOLIC SPIRITUALITY



**T**hese days we celebrated in Rome with great joy the release of our missionary brother, Fr. Thomas Uzhunnalil, who had been kidnapped in Yemen on March 4, 2016 and was released in September this year. As everyone knows, he has had an exciting meeting with the Pope and our Rector Major.

Though tired and weighing 30 kg less, he communicated his experience with great serenity and peace. Also the group of missionaries who are going through the on-going formation course in Rome met him. We share with you some elements of his apostolic spirituality.

- The first thing he asked for when he arrived in Rome was the **sacrament of Reconciliation**. Not having this gift for 18 months had been a heavy burden for him.

- Though he could not celebrate the **Eucharist** sacramentally, he repeated its prayers every day from memory. In fact, he made of his cross a continuous Eucharist.

- He was not allowed to read, write, walk; he could only think ... His thoughts were a **continuous prayer** for the Church, the Congregation, young people, the sisters who had been killed, his mission in Yemen, the Holy Father and also his captors ... He reminds us of Paul's urging, "Pray without interruption."

- The secret that enabled him to live his imprisonment with serenity was his full **conformation to God's will**. He said that after he had put his life completely in God's hands and only to do his will he felt great peace, which allowed him to sleep at night with great serenity. And this conformation to the divine will was not merely his personal offering; it was the result of his obedience to the Congregation that had asked of him to serve in Yemen. According to him, when obedience is seen as a response to the will of God, it becomes a source of serenity and peace.

- A **witness of Christ**. When he was taken to the Islamic commander, he was asked direct and clear whether he was a Muslim, and he replied, "I am a Christian."

- Both in his private conversation and in his lectures, he showed a great **attitude of forgiveness**. He certainly suffers deep pain from the killing of his sisters, but he did not harbour any hatred or resentment. He spoke respectfully of his captors.

- The conviction that in God's plan **each one has his own specific mission**. Everyone is called to a unique and irreplaceable mission.

- A **feeling of gratitude** was constant in his speech. Gratitude to God for his life and his delivery from captivity, gratitude to Mary Help of Christians who, he felt, was very close to him; gratitude to the Church, to the Congregation, to every Christian who offered prayers and sacrifices for his release. There have been so many testimonies of just ordinary believers on all continents who daily offered prayers and sacrifices for him.

Let us implore the Lord to continue sending to his abundant harvest.

*Don Martín Lasarte sdb*



*Witness of Salesian Missionary Sanctity  
Fr. Pierluigi Cameroni SDB, Postulator General for the Causes of Saints*

**Blessed Maria Troncatti (1883-1969)**, Daughter of Mary Help of Christians and a great missionary in the Amazon rainforest, among the Shuar of Ecuador. She worked with great tenacity for the promotion of women and the freedom of choice of one's partner in life. When it was announced that, for the first time ever, a Christian marriage was to be celebrated in the rainforest, where for the first time the partners, both of Shuar's tribe, had made their own free choice of each other, not pre-arranged by their relatives, it was a great joy for her. She then wrote in a letter: "We are all here for them: for the big and the small, for the sick, for the savage and for the civilized."



## Salesian Missionary Intention

### FOR SALESIANS IN PROFESSIONAL TRAINING CENTRES

*So that vocational training centres may continue to be schools of Christian growth and humanism in the world of work.*

*Vocational training is one of the most distinguished contributions for which Salesians are known and appreciated all over the world. It continues to be a priority of Youth Ministry today: to support and educate young people to enter the workplace. This precious mission requires of us professional competence, educational wisdom and evangelizing audacity to give a meaningful answer to the ever-changing challenges of the world of work.*

