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Newsletter for Salesian Missionary Animation



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*Ea*ster invites us to drink in abundance from the true sources of the Salesian missionary spirit. May the Risen Christ, as in John's dream at the age of nine, continue to show us our mission field!

The Apostolic Letter of Pope Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*, of which we will celebrate the centenary next year, recalls the commitment and missionary protagonism of the great religious orders, in particular the Franciscans, Dominicans and Jesuits. Their work and testimony, especially during the centuries of the modern period, profoundly marked the evangelization of so many peoples.

It is not by chance that Don Bosco recommends the first missionaries, leaving for Argentina to: "Love, esteem and respect other religious orders, and always speak well of them" (Ricordi, n.10).

This reminds us of our own historical responsibility today, as the Society of St. Francis de Sales. It was always intended to be missionary right from its foundation. It is to be a call to youthful missionary leadership in this third millennium.

Happy Easter everyone!

Guillermo Basañes
Fr Guillermo Basañes, SDB
Councillor for the Missions



Fatima, Seminar for SDB PDMA and FMA coordinators of missionary animation throughout Europe.

From 4 to 11 March we held at Fatima the continental seminar for Europe and the Middle East. Among the various points of learning, I emphasize the following: At Fatima we rediscovered synergy. We had proof that synergy is possible, in Europe in particular. There is great synergy here among FMA, SDB and volunteers ... It is impressive how synergy works!

It is very interesting that we were at Fatima, precisely at this time, to reflect on missionary animation ... It was Fatima that released a word of hope at the close of the First World War. Pope Benedict XV wrote in *Maximum Illud* that that period, a 100 years ago, was a wonderful time for "missionary sowing". The message of Fatima is clearly one of hope. Can our Salesian missionary animation become an equally clear and hopeful message to this "world, broken by the third world war", as Pope



Francis calls it?

We also learned again that Europe is also a mission territory and we want to do everything to convince even our confreres and sisters that it is so! If we look at various European realities with these eyes, everything changes, including our way of thinking and acting.

As for the journey that awaits us, we are convinced that reflection and prayer are very important. These days of the seminar (as in other continents) the *Lectio* of Sr Maria Ko accompanied us. In a very masterly, sharp and Salesian manner she tip-toed her message into our hearts. She pointed out to us the beginning of everything and the source from which to draw our missionary zeal. This is a lesson we took home with us.

We realized on the final day the fundamental importance of the contribution from the PDMA and Coordinators to the governance and animation of our provinces. We are called to do missionary animation of our confreres and sisters. With them we need to find intelligent paths forward. That takes study and prayer, in order not to be wasting our strength! It was interesting how, in the name of missionary animation - not because there is confusion, but because we need synergy - our reflection these days ranged from youth ministry, to formation, to social communication ... This is the synergy to build. Everyone will see, in their province, where there is more scope for synergy. We want to be very realistic: we start working where the land is more welcoming, where the fire of missionary zeal can take root.

As for areas that call for strategic attention, we chose the Family, Migration and Salesian Missionary Voluntary Service.

*Happy
Easter!*

"The poor who evangelize"



My name is Mario Bordignon. I was born 70 years ago in Veneto, in the North-East of Italy. I was at the Salesian professional school of Becchi where Don Bosco was born. As carpenters we saw to the maintenance of the Missionary Museum. The figures of various people in the museum and the objects preserved there provoked my adolescent fantasy. The desire to be a missionary was strengthened by several Lay Salesians. They were my idols and models, and some of them went off to the missions. After my training, at the age of 25, I was sent to Mato Grosso, Brazil. I was first at Cuiabá, Coxipó and in 1980 at Meruri among the Bororo.

This mission for the Bororo began in 1902. The school also welcomed, for a long time, the sons and daughters of settlers, as ours was the only school in the vast area of over 100 sq. km. The presence of these settlers compromised the practice of Bororo culture.

My first task was to look at people's reality, which was very different from all my adolescent fantasies and plans. The Indian in my books and magazines did not exist and his culture had almost disappeared. After my initial disappointment, I started observing things and listening to people. I made my contribution to the economy, to the functioning of the school, to the defense of the earth and to saving that beautiful culture. I tried to implement integral education. I was inspired by the example of Don Rodolfo, who had recently been killed defending the land of the Bororo, and Fr Gonzalo Ochoa, a great connoisseur of Bororo history and culture.

The best thing I did was to have an elderly Bororo as my godfather. He helped me a lot to live and understand this culture, no longer as an observer but as an actor. Fortunately for me, just a few kilometers from the old mission there was a village where they still practiced traditional rituals. My godfather was my teacher until his death. My knowledge of Bororo culture has greatly enriched my spirituality and my being. I understood in practice the words of Archbishop Helder Camara: "The poor evangelize us." I tried as a Salesian to pass on to our young people what I learned from my godfather. It was a slow but very sweet process.

The rituals and beautiful ornaments gradually reappeared; we made some inculturation of the Christian liturgy; the students at school began to use the texts we had prepared together with my godfather and Father Ochoa. The Bororo began to take pride in their cultural identity. We started training Bororo teachers; today the school is completely in their hands. One batch graduated from the university and others are on the way. Two court cases for the recovery of Bororo territory are well advanced, thanks to the struggle that we began, but is carried forward by the people. Things change quickly even in traditional villages. Globalization brings the good and the bad. Today the mission has great significance, more than ever, because of the numerous interferences that come from external cultures, often harmful to indigenous peoples. When the ideals of a missionary are very strong, spirituality still finds the strength to seek new ground to manifest God's love for others.

**Coad. Mario Bordignon, italian,
missionary among the Bororo of Brazil**



Witness of Salesian Missionary Sanctity

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

Blessed Augustus Czarotorski (1858-1893), 125th anniversary of whose death occurs on April 8th. He elaborated an effective method of discernment of divine designs. 'How lovely is your dwelling place, Oh, Lord of hosts! My soul mourns and pines for the house of the Lord ... For me one day in your house is more than a thousand elsewhere'. He chose these words of the Psalm as his motto and put them on the souvenir of his first Mass. He presented to God in prayer all his fundamental questions and perplexities and then, in the spirit of obedience, he followed the advice of his spiritual guides.



Salesian Missionary Intention

For Salesian Universities and centers of thought

That they may understand and propose human and gospel paths in front of today's social, financial and anthropological challenges.

Today the Salesian Congregation has a meaningful presence in the world of tertiary learning (IUS). Therefore, may our responsibility in educating the new generations to a committed Christian humanism grow to shape a more inclusive society, in solidarity.

