



THE SALESIAN MISSIONARY VOCATION

Reflections, processes and operational guidelines



Resource Material for the Salesian community

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The text presents a renewed vision on the Salesian Missions because we are in a different context to that of the missionary projects that spread the Congregation to the Americas (1875), Asia (1906) and Africa (1980).

Threefold Purpose

It has a threefold purpose: *motivate* the confreres to respond with missionary courage and generosity to the missionary invitation of the Rector Major, *improve* the processes of discernment, formation and integration and *harmonise* operational guidelines that are still relevant.

- We collaborate with the Church in fulfilling its mission to evangelise. Proclaiming the Gospel especially to the young is our primary missionary task.

NOT LIKE ONCE UPON A TIME

- Today 'missions' cannot be understood merely in geographical terms as movements towards the 'mission lands' like once upon a time, but are also to be understood in sociological, cultural terms and even in terms of our presence in the digital continent.



A PARADIGM SHIFT

Today, missionaries *come from* the **five continents** and are *sent to* the **five continents**. For us Salesians it was 'Project Europe' which brought us face to face with this change of missionary paradigm, which still requires many confreres to undertake a journey of **conversion of mind and heart** in order to appropriate it.

INITIAL PROCLAMATION

Our initiatives for human advancement, motivated by a deep faith, are an **Initial Proclamation**. In contexts where we cannot even mention the name of Jesus, we proclaim him through the testimony of our personal and community life.

Having clear intentions to foster Initial Proclamation can help us overcome the danger of being seen as *social services providers* or *social workers* rather than **witnesses to the primacy of God** and proclaimers of the Gospel.

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Don Bosco's Missionary Spirit

- The Missionary Spirit – summed up in the ***Da mihi animas*** – is typical of every Salesian because its roots are in the Salesian charism itself.
- As Salesians – we are, everywhere true missionaries of the young and youth is our mission land.
- Don Bosco's Missionary Spirit – as the heart of pastoral charity manifests itself in the ***oratorian heart***, in the ***passion*** for ***evangelisation*** and the ***willingness*** to be sent wherever there is a need.
- It is the Missionary Spirit that makes us live the Salesian consecrated life "***permanently in a state of mission***".

The missionary spirit is kept alive in every community and Province through:

- ❖ The ***summer missionary experience*** for the young confreres, for the formators and for the teachers of the study centres
- ❖ The experience in the ***international formation communities***
- ❖ The ***missionary prayer*** every 11th of the month
- ❖ The yearly ***Salesian Mission Day***
- ❖ other missionary animation initiatives

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The Salesian Missionary Vocation

- It is a ***call from the Lord***, within our common Salesian vocation.
- As an ***essential feature*** of Don Bosco's charism (*Const 30*), it is a more radical expression of pastoral charity.
- The Salesian Missionary Vocation is a gift from the Lord that needs to be ***invoked*** in prayer, ***awakened*** in the confreres, ***verified*** in their discernment, and ***accompanied*** in their growth.
- The Salesian Missionary does not belong to an elite group of privileged confreres. He is someone who wants to express in a more generous and radical way the common Salesian vocation of all confreres.

FR. ÁNGEL FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME: ***No Provincial can hinder a confrere who has made a journey of discernment of his own missionary vocation with the help of his Rector, spiritual guide and the Provincial himself, just because of a lack of personnel, or because the Province needs him.***

For reflection and sharing

- Have I moved from the old to the new paradigm of missions?
- What are the implications of this new missionary paradigm for me? For my Province?



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The Missions Interest All Salesians

- ✚ The Salesian missions are **part of the one Salesian mission**. Therefore, “the missions are of interest to the whole Congregation; Hence, all the confreres are involved in them in different ways” (*GC20*, 480).
- ✚ The Provincials share in the missionary solicitude of the Rector Major through their missionary concern for the whole Congregation. **Every Salesian Province**, whether rich or poor in personnel or resources, **shares responsibility** for the missionary projects of the **whole Congregation**.
- ✚ **Elderly** and **sick** confreres also provide valuable support with their **prayers** and **sacrifices**.
- ✚ There are no longer Provinces that are only ‘recipients’ or ‘senders’ or ‘missionary Provinces’. **All Provinces send** and **receive** missionaries. This **missionary reciprocity** makes us available for the mutual sharing of means, personnel and spiritual assistance.

Missionary generosity

“**Missionary generosity** has been one of the reasons for the good health and expansion of the Congregation during its first century and a half of life.”
(Fr. VECCHI, *AGC* 362, 8).

It frees us “from the dangers of a **middle-class lifestyle**, **spiritual superficiality** and **generecism**” and is “leading us forward into the future with **hope**”
(Fr. VIGANÒ, *AGC* 336, 12).

It is the **missionary impetus** of the Congregation that invigorates **faith**, gives new **vocational enthusiasm** and revitalises the **charismatic identity** of the confreres both in the Province that sends and in the Province that receives missionaries.



PROVINCIAL AND CONGREGATIONAL MISSIONARY PROJECT



A **Province** cannot be generous with regard to the **Congregational missionary project** if it is not seriously concerned with a **Provincial missionary project**. And indeed, the missionary commitment within the **Province** is a credible sign and stimulus for the **missionary** commitment of the **Congregation**, and vice versa. Each influences the other, stimulates it and helps it.

Requests for Missionaries

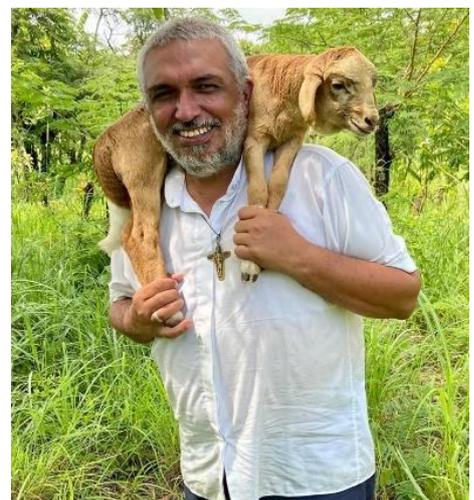
- a. The Provincial, with the consent of his Council, presents a concrete **missionary project** to the Rector Major. The approval of the Rector Major, with his Council, will be the condition for sending missionaries to that Province. Without this prior condition, the sending of missionaries will not be possible.
- b. Once the request is accepted, the Provincial will dialogue with the General Councillor for the Missions regarding:
 - the **profile** of the new missionary or missionaries;
 - **nationalities** who find it easy to enter the country or to obtain a visa;
 - **documents** to be presented by the missionaries in order to obtain a residence or missionary visa.
 - the **Reception and Integration Plan** for the new missionaries which indicates the following:
 - A formal **language course of at least six months**, which can be extended if the new missionary needs it;
 - A specific **confreere to accompany** new arrivals;
 - How to provide for the spiritual needs (confessions, spiritual direction) of the new missionary;
 - The gradual **process of introducing** the new missionary into the receiving Province.

MISSIONARY FOR LIFE

Missionary life is a radical and complete gift of self which, by its very nature, implies total availability **without any time limits** (*ad vitam*).

The Salesian goes on mission to **remain there**.

If, for serious reasons, he needs to return to his Province of origin, upon hearing the opinion of the **two Provincials** concerned, the **Rector Major** shall give his consent or otherwise.





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A renewed vision, a renewed profile

We find ourselves in a different context from the first missionary expedition to America (1875) or from 'Project Africa' (1980). Salesian missionaries today should have Fr. John Cagliero's audacity and zeal but with a renewed vision of the missions which implies a renewed profile of the Salesian missionary.

The Profile of the Salesian Missionary Today

- The Salesian Missionary is definitively sent to a PROVINCE or a DELEGATION (C. 159).
- He contributes to INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE, to the INCULTURATION of the faith and of the Salesian charism.
- He is open to be ENRICHED BY THE LOCAL CULTURE while continuing to deepen his understanding of it in the light of the Christian faith and the Salesian charism.
- He INTEGRATES himself within the LOCAL CHURCH and in the life and educative-pastoral plan (SEPP) of the PROVINCE.

- The Salesian Missionary is not only one who gives but above all one who RECEIVES.
- He not only teaches, but above all he LEARNS from the PEOPLE he serves, who are NOT only PASSIVE RECIPIENTS of his efforts.
- As a mediator, he keeps NOTHING FOR HIMSELF, spending himself generously even until he is consumed.
- He takes care to keep alive his ardour for HOLINESS through the 'GRACE OF UNITY'.
- He is committed to COLLABORATION with the LAITY, MISSIONARY VOLUNTEERS and the members of the SALESIAN FAMILY.

- The presence of Missionaries strengthens inculturation because they offer a PERSPECTIVE OF THE CULTURE that local confreres do not have; while local confreres have a perception of their culture that missionaries do not have.
- A Province made up only of CONFRERES OF THE SAME CULTURE risks being less sensitive to the challenge of INTERCULTURALITY and less able to see beyond the confines of its own culture.

- In OLD AGE he continues his missionary work by sharing his FRIENDSHIP and WISDOM with PRAYER and EXAMPLE of life: BURIAL in his mission land seals this.
- Missionary life is a radical and complete GIFT OF ONESELF that implies total availability WITHOUT any TIME LIMIT (*ad vitam*).

THE MISSIONARY VOCATION

Our religious profession is a unique and fruitful deepening of our baptismal consecration in view of our particular mission in the Church. Hence, the Salesian missionary vocation is a call from the Lord, within our common Salesian vocation.

There are some Salesians who feel called for being sent out of their own cultural setting or country to any part of the world whatsoever (*AD EXTEROS*) to cooperate *zealously* and *boldly* in the new frontiers of our mission of evangelisation, or where the Church is not yet fully established (*AD GENTES*), without any time limits (*AD VITAM*).

MISSIONARY EXPERIENCE

In the Congregation the confreres can offer to work temporarily in another Province, or to respond to a specific or urgent need.

In the light of a renewed vision of the missions, it is no longer appropriate to speak of *missionaries ad tempus* (temporary) but of *missionary experience*.

The missionary experience may be an opportunity for some confreres to discern and mature their missionary vocation. In this case, the confrere concerned will present his total availability to the Rector Major for the missionary projects of the Congregation

For this *missionary experience*, an agreement is signed between two Provincials for three or five years. It may be renewed but not longer than a total period of ten years. A copy is sent to the Councillor for the Missions, the Regional Councillor and the Secretary General.

- **The *missionary experience* is a positive experience for many Provinces and confreres**



- *What is MY profile of a Salesian Missionary?*
- *What are the implications of this renewed missionary profile for me?*



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Discernment of the Missionary Vocation

The missionary vocation needs careful discernment. This is a gradual and progressive process that is carried out with the help of the spiritual guide, the Rector and the formation team.

In the different phases of **INITIAL FORMATION**, all those being formed are encouraged to keep the **MISSIONARY SPIRIT** alive as an essential element of our charism, through the *contents to be emphasised*, the *attitudes to be cultivated* and the *experiences to be promoted* in each formation phase. They are formed to be available and to keep an eye open on the life of the Church and the Congregation by making missionary projects known.



“It is the responsibility of the **Provincials**, Provincial Delegates for Missionary Animation (**PDMA**) and **formators** to encourage discernment of the life-long missionary vocation, especially in young confreres.” (AGC 429, p. 50.)

There is no age limit for leaving as a missionary. However, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, inculturation and language learning are easier at a young age. The **POST-NOVITIATE** is the most suitable phase of formation for serious missionary discernment.

Postnovices who show interest in becoming missionaries are more closely **ACCOMPANIED**, so they can embark on a good discernment path.

The Provincial, in dialogue with the General Councillor for the Missions, may send the candidate as a post-novice missionary candidate for a year of practical training in a missionary work in his own Province, or in another one in order to better discern one's missionary vocation.

Selection and Sending of Missionaries

Since Fr Pascual Chávez launched 'Project Europe' in 2008 there is a more collegial process of discerning, choosing and sending missionaries.

Stages of Discernment

- a. The Rector Major writes a **missionary appeal** to all the confreres on 18 December where he lists the missionary priorities for the year.
- b. The **confrere writes** a letter to the Rector Major presenting his missionary availability.
- c. On receiving the letter, the Rector Major forwards it to the **Councillor for the Missions**.
- d. The General Councillor for the Missions begins or continues the **dialogue with the candidate**.
- e. The General Councillor for the Missions dialogues with the *candidate's Provincial* asking him and his Council for a written opinion to **verify the candidate's suitability**. If the candidate is in initial formation, the written opinion of the Rector and the House Council is required.
- f. Having received the favourable opinion of the Provincial and his Council (and of the Rector and the House Councillor) the General Councillor for the Missions makes a **study with the Rector Major** on the needs, the missionary priorities for the year and the **possible destinations**.
- g. The General Councillor for the Missions puts a proposal to the **General Council** regarding the destinations of the members of the next missionary expedition.

The Missionary Send-Off

It is appropriate that there be a **farewell ceremony** in the Province for the missionary confrere. The giving of the missionary cross is reserved to the Rector Major alone at the time of the missionary send-off.

The missionary candidate participates in Rome in the **five-week Orientation Course** in preparation for his missionary posting. During the course, having heard the candidate personally, the General Councillor for the Missions concludes the discernment for the new missionary's final destination.

After the ceremony of the **giving of the Missionary Cross**, the missionary returns to his Province of origin where he prepares his documents and waits for his visa. If he is able to obtain a visa in Italy, he will be temporarily assigned to a Salesian house, pending the migration procedures, with the prior consent of the Provincial concerned.

The missionary's Provincial of origin is asked to give the departing missionary who is awaiting migration procedures, the possibility of **beginning his study of the language of his destination**, according to local possibilities.

For missionaries who leave as practical trainees, time spent exclusively *studying the language* or waiting for *migration procedures* is **not** considered as being **part of their practical training**.

The distinctive **Salesian missionary cross** is given by the Rector Major only to those who offer themselves to be missionaries.

