



We have recently seen and listened to the Missionary Appeal that the Rector Major made on December 8, 2019 (<http://www.infoans.org>). The 151st Missionary Expedition awaits its generous candidates. This Expedition will be sent from Valdocco on Sunday, September 27, 2020.

"I make this Missionary Appeal with great enthusiasm and strong conviction," said the successor of Don Bosco, addressing all young confreres, *"as well as those of all ages"*.

Cagliero, Fagnano, Costamagna, Caravario, Versiglia, Cimatti, as well as the most recent practical trainees, just sent: all missionaries *ad gentes, ad exteros, ad vitam*. Are you ready to prolong this list and this mission with your name?

It is essentially an invitation to listen: to listen to God's call, because it is the Lord that continues his call to this special vocation. Only in harmony with him in the first place will we be able to listen to this appeal. It is a listening that leads us to discernment, to really listen to God within our hearts.

Therefore, it is a matter of listening well and discerning well, in order to respond well; that is, with generosity.

And Fr Angel concludes by saying: *"I invite you to listen. I pray for you. I'm waiting for your letters."*

Fr. Guillermo Basanes, SDB
Councillor for the Missions

This year, we complete the 2015-2020 six-year period, centred around the theme of Initial Proclamation in the different contexts of the Salesian mission. After focusing on Oceania (2016), America (2017), Asia (2018) and Africa (2019), 2020 is dedicated to the Initial Proclamation of Jesus Christ in Europe through our Oratories and Youth Centres.

The oratory is an educative environment with a missionary impulse, open to children and young people. (Reg. 11).

The educative and evangelizing power of this typically Salesian presence offers today, as in yester years, a lively and relevant missionary programme for European youth. It is an outgoing oratory-church open to the youth-world of the locality, loving what the young love so that they may love the Lord, whom we love.

This year's Salesian Missionary Day (SMD) also wants to encourage the Provinces of all the five continents to take to heart this original presence of Don Bosco, as a fundamental way of meeting children, adolescents and young people. In the gratuitousness, freedom and family atmosphere of a creative ministry, we approach, accompany, educate and announce the Good News of Jesus to all those the Lord sends our way. *"Don Bosco lived a unique pastoral experience in his first oratory, which was for the young a home that welcomes, a parish that evangelizes, a school that leads to life and a playground in which to meet friends and live in joy. In fulfilling our mission today, Valdocco's experience remains a permanent criterion of discernment and renewal of every activity and work.* (Cont. 40)

The launch of the SMD 2020 takes place on the feast of the Epiphany. It is celebrated in the week around November 11th. It aims to keep alive the missionary flame of the Congregation. May the Lord grant all the Salesians and lay members of the Salesian Family an oratorian-missionary heart for today's youth.



A SMALL FLOCK IN AZERBAIJAN

I was born Czechoslovakia, then a socialist country. Even as a boy I wanted to be a priest and a missionary. I had heard stories of missionaries, read a few books and articles. My encounters with non-believers and those who did not practice their religion played an important role in my vocational discernment. My experiences while in practical training and the period of theological studies in Italy were very important. I think that the definitive push to make my official application for the missions was my willingness to go and serve wherever people have an objective difficulty in getting to know Jesus, the Son of God, and to have an experience of the Church as a community.

I have lived eight years in Azerbaijan, a country located between Europe and Asia. It is a post-Soviet, secular, multicultural nation, tolerant of all religions. The challenge I face is that of living among people of various cultures with an oriental background, mostly Muslim. Also, the great geographical distance from typical Catholic environments costs me a lot. This is a country of 10 million inhabitants, of whom only three hundred are Catholics. Around six hundred foreigners also attend the Holy Mass on Sundays and Feast days, more or less regularly. The Catholic presence consists of just a single parish entrusted to the Salesians. Fortunately, there are also the sisters of Mother Teresa (MC) and the Salesian sisters (FMA). The biggest challenge, however, is my personal limitations. Our community has limitations, too, because we are only eight Salesians, of whom one is the bishop of the country.

There are, however, many joys. Among the external ones, the greatest have certainly been the visit of Pope Francis in 2016, the very first Mass of a Supreme Pontiff in the country and the episcopal ordination of our Prefect Apostolic, the first Rector of our community. But the supreme joy is to hear the spontaneous testimonies of those who have received the gift of faith in Jesus. One of these was extremely meaningful to me. I was with one of our parishioners in a village below the Caucasus Mountains. We had come to visit an acquaintance of his, a Protestant. Every day we prayed together and, in the evenings, we shared our experiences with the Word of God. One day, climbing a hill with a beautiful view of the whole village, our host began to sing and praise God. He had tears in his eyes. He wondered aloud why, among so many people, only his family had the grace of receiving the gift of being Christian. At that moment I felt an immense joy. Even through my mere presence in Azerbaijan, God wants to draw closer to him those whom he chooses to.

I greet my confreres who are discerning whether they are called to a life in the missions. How does one recognize this gift? I think, we need to be open to God's will, whatever it may be. It is necessary to know how to be yourself, with one's own possibilities and limitations. At the same time, you have to leave all your expectations back at home. Finally, God invites us to welcome all people as our brothers and sisters though they be totally different from us. He wants to come among us, sinners, to make us his friends and fellow citizens of heaven.

Vladimir Baxa, Slovak missionary in Baku, Azerbaijan



Witness of Salesian Missionary Sanctity

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

Blessed Tito Zeman (1915-1969) He was unjustly imprisoned, tortured, condemned and locked up in rigorous imprisonment for 13 long years. Subsequently, he was always under surveillance and prevented from fully carrying out his priestly and educational vocation. He is an example and model of a pastor. He was able to spend and give his life for young people for whom, in the depths of their heart and also in social life, it was impossible to follow Christ more closely. His message, "Always act according to the style of Don Bosco and the others will follow you," is relevant even today.

**For promoting
world peace**



Salesian Missionary Intention

*The Salesian Family is present in many
conflict-ridden areas, working for peace*

*Let us pray that Christians, those who follow other religions,
and all people of good will promote peace and justice in the world.*

