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Newsletter for Salesian Missionary Animation

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Dear confreres, dear friends.

This month, as we enter the season of Lent, let us take another step forward with Pope Francis and the Beatitudes:

"Blessed are the meek because they will inherit the earth."

"React with humble meekness; this is holiness" (Gaudete et Exsultate 74).

And this is precisely how the Salesian missionary reacts habitually, inspired by St. Francis de Sales. Despite the hardships of daily life - cultural distance, inhospitable climate, hypocrisy, persecution - the missionary, son of Don

Bosco, is never defeated because he has his charismatic sweetness. And this is exactly what makes his vocation fruitful. There is an interesting story behind the Christian and Salesian vocation of Fr. Shirieda, a Japanese Salesian of the first generation. A Salesian brother caught him stealing nails in our house. Young Shirieda was trying to help his father - in the very hard times of the war - to build their own house. Brother did not punish him. Instead, he welcomed him as a friend, filled his pockets with nails and told him not to steal anymore. He could come again whenever he needed something and he would be most welcome. Always react with humble meekness, with the kindness of Don Bosco; this is what distinguishes the Salesian missionary.

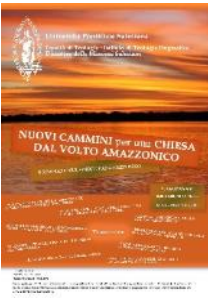
Fr. Guillermo Basañes, SDB
Councillor for the Missions

NEWS

We held the "World Consultation on the Missions" from 25th to 27th of January.

The participants included the Regional Coordinators of Missionary Animation, members of the Missions Sector at the Generalate and the confreres of UPS associated with the topic of the Missions. We reflected on our Missionary Animation in the various regions of the Congregation, shared our good practices and studied the challenges we face. We started developing proposals to be sent to GC 28.

- The Rector Major and his Council approved the **Manual for Volunteering within the Salesian Mission - Identity and Orientations of Salesian Missionary Volunteering**. It was officially released on 31st January 2019. This document will be of great help to the Provinces as it offers criteria and guidelines for the promotion of missionary voluntary service among our young people.



- From the 15th to the 17th of February a zonal meeting took place in Austria (Vienna) with 15 new young missionaries of the **Project Europe** in AUS, FRB, GBR and IME (Albania, Kosovo). These were moments of sharing, reflection and study.

- In the Salesian Pontifical University, there will be a seminar on "New Paths for a Church with an Amazonian Face". It will be an opportunity to reflect on the Salesian presence in this region, the challenges we face and the steps to take for the evangelization of these peoples, especially the Youth.

On 26 and 27 March there will be a **National Seminar at Madrid dealing with Missionary Animation: "The mission - pastoral renewal"**. It is a really meaningful initiative discussing how Missionary Animation, if placed at the heart of provincial projects, can generate apostolic dynamism. Delegates of pastoral care and missionary animation will participate.



For the recognition of the rights of Christian communities



Salesian Missionary International

So that Christian communities, especially those that are persecuted, can feel the closeness of Christ and their rights be recognized.

A The Salesian Family is found at the heart of the Church and carries out its mission in the five continents, in different contexts; in some of these contexts, the Church is persecuted not only by religious fundamentalism, but also because of secularism. Let us pray that the Salesians may continue to be educators and pastors of the young, and form them to communion and the courage of Gospel witness.



I love to the end: Fr. António Cesar Fernández



It is a hot day, February 15, 2019, in Nohao, in the province of Boulgou, in Burkina Faso. Three Salesians arrive at the customs office, coming from Lomé, Togo, going to the Ouagadougou mission. An armed group of guerrillas also arrives. They kill five government officials. The attackers take over the car of the Salesians. They see a religious, already an old man; they take him aside. The terrorists talk to each other in a low voice. They lead the honored priest into the forest. Three shots are heard. Only the guerrillas return; they put their motorcycles into high-decibel movement and leave a cloud of dust behind them.

There, on the soil of Burkina Faso lies the body of the Salesian Antonio César Fernández. It's a Friday and it's the ninth hour (15.00). It is his Good Friday. Like the Savior; instead of 3 nails, there were 3 not on the hands and feet, but 2 on the stomach and one on the the culmination of his journey, of his 'YES!' to the Father and of his dedication to humanity; Fr César reached the end of his pilgrimage to African lands, after 72 years of life, 55 as a Salesian of Don Bosco, 46 as a priest and 37 as a missionary. It is the end of a journey of love for the Lord and for young Africans. Don Bosco said that when a Salesian dies at work it is a day of glory for the Congregation; how much more so, if he succumbs giving his life in martyrdom.

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The month of February (25th) the Church celebrates the Salesian Protomartyr Saints: Versiglia and Caravario. They loved their adopted people; gave their lives for them. They were also taken to a forest and shot there. Father César is the proto-martyr priest of 2019. In 2018, violence took the lives of 39 priests of the Church.

Cesar always liked to be the first. He was in the first group of Salesians to found the flourishing presence of Don Bosco in Togo. He always wanted to be the first; but first in the eyes of Jesus: first in serving, first in taking the first step, rather than be the last. "Whoever wants to be the first becomes a servant of all, because the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for a multitude" (Mk 10: 44-45).

The death of Fr. César brought great sorrow to his family and his compatriots at Pozoblanco in Spain. He is mourned by his Salesian brothers who feel the loss of a dear brother, a point of reference in the province, someone who knew how to inculturate Don Bosco's charism in those lands. He had been the master of novices for 10 years. The simple people and youth of Burkina, Togo, Benin, Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Ivory Coast and other places mourn him. He had walked among them doing good to all.

As Father Faustino said: "It was the point of arrival of a life offered out of affection and love ... He bore so much fruit in life that they will continue after his death." He reminds us of Jesus' words: "If the grain of wheat that falls to the earth does not die, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn 12,24). His testimony has become a permanent proclamation of the Gospel. His joyful Salesian life is a call to the young to live a full and happy life, loving with all their heart.

The testimony of consecration that he left us in that little video circulating on the net is exciting. His words are spontaneous, simple and profound; they sum up a life of donation:

"I am 50 years a Salesian, I am perpetually professed. What I can tell you is that living Salesian life, the Salesian vocation, is a grace of the Lord, a never-ending chain of thanks. The only thing I can say is that I have received many benefits from the Lord - my contact with young people, the young people in the several places where I was taught to be a Salesian and to be what I am now ... This is an act of thanksgiving because I do not deserve this vocation. So, thank you very much, Lord. I encourage those who feel this vocation to truly realize it ... Although it is not easy, it is a joy to be able to serve the Congregation and the young."

In heaven, he continues to give thanks for his Salesian vocation, for the blessings that the Lord granted him in the missions; for the grace of living with and for the young ... and now he will also sing: "Thank you for giving me the palm of martyrdom." "Thank you!"

Fr. Martín Lasarte sdb



Witness of Salesian Missionary Sanctity

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



Blessed Alexandrina Maria da Costa (1904-1955), Portuguese, Salesian Cooperator and a great mystic of the Eucharist. This is how she expressed her longing for holiness: "Your Resurrection, O my Jesus, raises my soul to that love and grace that my heart desires so much. I want to be holy! ... I will suffer so that vanity, thirst for domination, immodesty and wasteful use of money may disappear from the world. I will suffer for the expansion of the missions so that the word of Jesus may spread everywhere, the only truth ... My desire is that all men be holy."