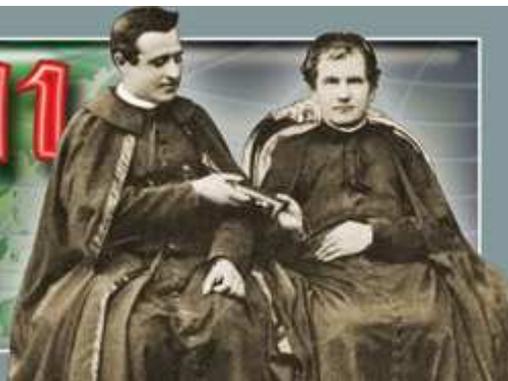


# CAGLIERO 11

Newsletter for Salesian Missionary Animation



## The Don Bosco of Tonj

Dear Salesian missionaries and friends of the Salesian Missions!

On June 24, 2011 a conference entitled 'Don Bosco Tonj, life and spirituality of Don Lee Taeseok' was held in the Provincial house in Seoul, South Korea. It's been a year and a half after the death of an amiable missionary. John Lee was sent to Sudan in the community of Tonj soon after his ordination to the priesthood on June 24, 2001. He was a doctor, musician, teacher, Salesian. He lived a dedicated and simple life as a son of Don Bosco. He died at the age of 47, in Seoul on January 14, 2010 after a 13-month battle with cancer.

John was a very gifted young Salesian. When he was a practical trainee in the community of Dae Rim Dong he was the assistant of eighty boys at risk. He used his musical talents with so much creativity in the playground and in the classroom. Imagine 80 difficult youngsters who are just learning to write the Korean alphabet at 18 years of age. Yet, every Sunday evening they sang the Tantum Ergo in Latin with a pop rhythm composed by John! After his practical trainee he was sent to UPS in Rome for theology in 1997. As a Deacon he asked to go for the summer in Africa, to see if there is 'a place' for him. Thanks to Providence and Fr. James Pulickal during that month he was able to reach South Sudan, which was, then, at war. The few days he spent in the community of Tonj and the encounter with the lepers who live near the community were enough to capture his heart. He returned to Tonj after ordination to live a full life as a doctor, a Salesian and a priest in order to 'treat the lepers as he would treat Jesus'.

He became part of the Salesian community of Tonj which was composed of many nationalities, whose mission, after the war, was to rebuild the Christian community, the Oratory, schools, and mission stations in many villages. They called him 'Father Jolly', for his good humour and friendship with the young people with whom he had shared his whole heart.

With the help of many, he founded a small clinic and a brass band. After his death the Don Bosco Radio 91 FM was opened. At the moment a secondary school is under construction.



During his eight years of work in Tonj, besides the two books about his Tonj experience (The Rays of the Sun in Africa are still sad and Will You Be My Friend?), the Korean television KBS also came to Tonj to make a documentary. Bishop Paul Choi, Bishop of Suwon (Korea) also came to see the reality of Tonj and his medical missionary. These past twelve months thousands have seen the film 'Do not Cry For Me Sudan' based on Korean television's documentary. It is now circulated in several languages the world over. The figure of Fr. John has attracted nearly 30,000 to the "John Lee Foundation," which helps the Salesian work in Sudan. I was his Rector, and later also his Provincial in Korea. The first African country I visited was just Sudan. I had the last meeting with Fr. John a week before his

death, when he received the Sacrament of the Sick in Seoul in the winter of 2010. He lived this vocation with joy, optimism, consistency, passion and deep spirit of family.

We need to tell stories of the missionary vocations. Their example is more attractive which serves as the best invitation to see Don Bosco alive today in many communities on frontier situation such as Tonj, South Sudan. In this way many young people could understand how a mission vocation is born! I hope that, this year, every Salesian missionary vocation would narrate once more, at least once, the call of the Lord who has guided him on the way of life of the Gospel.

*Václav Klement*

Fr. Václav Klement, SDB  
Councillor for the Missions

## **I wanted to be a missionary, but I had to conquer my fears and anxieties first**

I grew up with the Salesians and from an early age I was fascinated by the life of missionaries who came to Nigeria, and the way they brought people up in the faith. When I was in the noviciate in Ghana, we used to go out to the villages for Holy Mass. It was during these experiences that I first felt the call to be a missionary. It was also during that same period in the noviciate when we were reflecting on the Salesian saints. I was deeply touched by the life of Blessed Luigi Variara and I chose him as a model. After some time of reflection and prayer I shared with my Novice Master my desire to be a missionary.

Nigeria surely still needs many missionaries but I decided to be a missionary myself because I wanted to share the faith I have received with those who do not know Christ yet. I also felt that it was an expression of gratitude for the countless blessings and vocations which our Province has received.

However, I spent sleepless nights after it was communicated to me that I will be sent to Sudan. After all the stories I heard, I kept asking myself why Sudan. I woke up and cried in the middle of the night several times. Although I wanted to respond to the yearnings of my heart, I also had to struggle to put my fears and anxieties behind me and just dare and hope.

I am grateful for the *Orientation Course for New Missionaries* in Rome. By listening to the dreams and preoccupations of other missionaries and interacting with them I was quite relieved to realise that I was not alone with my fears and hopes. The course also opened my eyes to certain areas of missionary life that I had never thought of before.

My first months in Sudan were full of ups and downs.

The climate was terribly hot and dry. I couldn't communicate a word in Arabic. I felt so useless because I was unable to communicate with the boys in the school or in the oratory. I even questioned the sense of my being in Sudan. Many times Muslim boys would ask me about my children or where my wives are because religious life is an alien concept in Islam. There were also many things to be done for the people and I felt that the situation was so overwhelming. But the whole story changed when I began to learn their ways of life and their language, and when I started to be present among the boys as a brother and a friend. I soon realised that I began to understand them better.

Now that I am studying theology in Messina and I have time to reflect on my past experiences, I realised that it was in the midst of these poor boys that I learnt to better appreciate my Salesian vocation even if I could not explain it to them as well as our Salesian style of education. I now realised that I learnt a lot from them. I hope that my witness of Salesian religious life also taught them something. I thank God for the gift of a missionary vocation and the grace he bestows on me to daily respond to this call!

*Cl. Akinyemi Matthew Olusola  
nigerian, missionary in Sudan*



## **Salesian Missionary Intention**

### **Africa - Commitment in Health Care Ministry**

For all members of the Salesian Family in Africa who work directly in the field of health care.

*The Synod for Africa, underlined: "AIDS is a pandemic, together with malaria and tuberculosis, which is decimating African populations and severely damaging their economic and social life. It is not to be looked at as either a medical-pharmaceutical problem or solely as an issue of a change in human behaviour. It is truly an issue of integral development and justice, which requires a holistic approach and response by the Church" (Propositio 51). May Blesseds Luigi Variara and Artemide Zatti, who have been known to be good Samaritans, with the spirit of Don Bosco, protect and inspire our brothers and sisters in the Salesian Family.*



Send your suggestions and contributions to [cagliero11@gmail.com](mailto:cagliero11@gmail.com)