



The missionary call of the Rector Major, last December, was a strong "whisper" in our Salesian ears and hearts. We pray that the Spirit will still stir a generous response!

I would also like to start drawing your attention little by little to another unexpected announcement that Pope Francis made to the whole Church: the celebration of an extraordinary missionary month

in October 2019. This year, 2018, has its orientation and spotlight on the path walked by the entire Church, the Synod on the young. But I

invite you already now to take up the Apostolic Letter of Pope Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*, written in 1919. Next year will be its centenary. This is what will motivate the celebration of the missionary month announced by Pope Francis. We need to take this invitation seriously. We could study this precious letter very carefully.

The title of the Apostolic Letter is very striking: "Maximum Illud". "Something Very Big". That is, proclaiming the Good News to all peoples is a "great and sublime mission". We have the right phrase engraved clearly on the obverse side of the new Salesian missionary crucifix: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all peoples!"

G. Basañes

Fr Guillermo Basañes, SDB
Councillor for the Missions

Young Refugees challenge us.

The 51st World Day of Peace: the theme was: Migrants and refugees: men and women in search of peace. This pastoral challenge was taken up by Salesians in various part of the world with great missionary zeal. Just look at Mexico, Colombia, India, Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria, Ethiopia, Kenya and elsewhere. Recently a new Salesian community has been formed for refugees from South Sudan at Palabek, Uganda. Missionaries are going there from Asia, Africa and America.

In his message for peace, the Pope insists on four verbs: "welcome, protect, promote and integrate".

"Welcome" recalls the need to widen the possibilities of legal entry. Refugees and migrants cannot be sent back to places where persecution and violence await them. There is a need to balance the concern for national security with the protection of fundamental human rights. Scripture reminds us: "Do not forget hospitality; some, who practiced it, have welcomed angels without knowing it" (Heb 13,2)

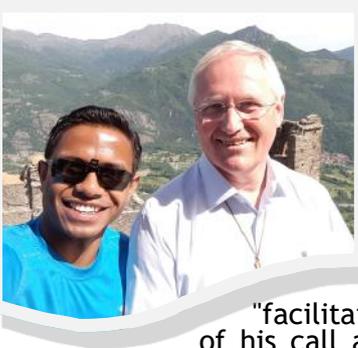
"Protect" recalls the duty to recognize and protect the inviolable dignity of those fleeing from a real danger in search of asylum and security. We need to prevent their exploitation. I am thinking, in particular, of women and children. They are more exposed to risks and abuses that may even go to the extent of enslavement. God does not discriminate: "The Lord protects the stranger; He supports the orphan and the widow" (Ps 148: 9).

"Promote" refers to support for the integral human development of migrants and refugees. There are many possible tools for this task. I would like to underline the importance of ensuring access for children and young people to all levels of education. With education they will not only be able to cultivate and capitalize on their abilities; they will also be enabled to interact with others in a spirit of dialogue rather than closure or confrontation. The Bible teaches us that God "loves the stranger and gives him bread and clothing"; He exhorts: "Love, therefore, the foreigner since you too were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deut. 10.18-19).

Finally, **"Integrate"** means to allow refugees and migrants to participate fully in the life of the society that welcomes them. This initiates a dynamic of mutual enrichment and fruitful collaboration. It promotes the integral human development of local communities. As St. Paul writes: "You are no longer strangers or guests; you are among the community of saints and within the family of God" (Eph 2:19).



MISSIONARY LIFE - WILL OF GOD AND A BLESSING



I would like to share with you three things that stood me in good stead during the last few months in the province of Belgium-North-Netherlands: Grace of God - Faith Vision - Prayer.

God's grace and His will: Nothing is impossible for God. The story of Jonah in the Bible makes me reflect on my own life. God sent Jonah to Nineveh to "facilitate" the repentance of sinners. He, instead, tried to flee right from the beginning of his call and mission. He refused to cooperate with God. It is interesting to note that Jonah was not allowed to make his own plans as he wanted. In the end, God is capable of making one cooperate. He "widens" one's vision. I consider my missionary life the grace and the will of God. I have my daily challenges: the language barrier, the cultural shock, the cold, the lifestyle, the way of living the faith. All these difficulties in life have an impact on my missionary life. There were times when I wanted to do things my way and according to my whim. However, what I have learned so far has made me humble and grateful. I now follow Him wherever He guides me. He does everything with me as he did with Jonah.

The vision of faith: a human being in the secularized world finds it difficult to accept anything outside the explanations and evidence provided by science. How do we find God in a world so strongly influenced by scientific dictates? I do not believe in the dualism of science and faith. I affirm that God intervenes in our life. I look back and reflect on my experiences of God's care and protection. He did not leave me alone in difficult times. He has always been with me in all circumstances, as he had promised. "I am with you always until the end of time" (Mt 28.20).

Prayer: I am powerless to control the world myself when I face difficult situations. I need someone who understands me deeply. God is that Someone. I bring to Him all that I feel and experience. I express them through my daily prayer. I built up this relationship of trust right from the time I first began dreaming of becoming a missionary when I was still a novice. Until now, thank God, I maintain this contact with the Lord through my personal and community prayer: the daily rosary, thanking the Lord when I wake up in the morning and before I go to sleep at night, etc. This is the strongest pivot of my life. I do it regularly, faithfully and devoutly. My experience tells me that the Lord hears my cries.

These are the three elements that strengthen me. They make me happy and optimistic as a missionary: I am happy in my position here in Amsterdam (Netherlands) with four confreres from our province, Belgium-North-Netherlands. We are a multicultural community of Belgians, Indonesians, Indians and Timorese. Our community is entrusted with the mission to serve four parishes and five churches within a radius of seven kilometers of our community. We have just begun new pastoral activities for young people. We do a kind of Lectio divina and a Taizé style prayer meeting. We hope that, through the intercession of our Mother, everything will be better in the next year and bear more fruits in the Kingdom of God.

Cirilo de Deus, Timorese, missionary in Amsterdam, BEN Province



Witness of Salesian Missionary Sanctity

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

Blessed Eusebia Palomino (1899-1935), Daughter of Mary Help of Christians. Clothed in humility and simplicity, she became a spiritual teacher and guide. When the Provincial is surprised by the number of vocations from Valverde del Camino, they tell her of a cook, who suffers from asthma and narrates beautiful stories to the girls. Later there will also be priests who seek out this humble nun, who has no qualifications in theology, but does have a heart overflowing with the wisdom of God. Seminarians, nuns, priests and girls went to Sister Eusebia to consult her about their future. She helped them all, in the midst of hanging the laundry out, working in the vegetable garden or peeling potatoes in the kitchen. In all calm and patience she advised, predicted the future, encouraged true vocations and discouraged false ones.

For Salesians of America



Salesian Missionary Intention

That, as educators of the young and the laity, they may know how to form in them, in the light of the Gospel, the values of honesty, justice, solidarity and service.

L'America Several countries of America are marked by intense social conflicts and the scourge of corruption. We are called to educate the young and the laity in the social dimensions of charity, transparency and righteousness. We pray that the educational efforts of the Salesian Family may bear fruits of justice and solidarity in civil society.

