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Newsletter for Salesian Missionary Animation



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Day by day, the Synod on young people is taking on more weight and color. We are, at the same time, preparing for the extraordinary missionary month of 2019, recalling the one hundred years since the Apostolic Letter of Pope Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*, a letter full of missionary enthusiasm *ad gentes*.

There can be no "missions" if there are no missionaries. It is therefore necessary to promote the missionary vocation *ad gentes, ad exteros, ad vitam*. We need to do this with zeal: "as soon as someone shows signs of a vocation to the Missions", says Pope Benedict XV. We need to send the best:

"Let the Superiors of Congregations and Religious Institutes that dedicate themselves to the Foreign Missions take care that they offer them only the flowers among their students." Pope Francis used almost the same words when speaking to us during the GC27: "the best must be sent! The best!"

This availability cannot only be for going out the first time; it has to be permanent. We need missionaries who, even after years of life and work in one mission, are ready to move once again to another. In this our Marian month par excellence, we ask our Mother, the Help of Christians, to breathe into us a generous missionary *fiat!*

J. Basañes

Fr Guillermo Basañes, SDB - Councillor for the Missions



The famous painting by Lorenzone, which dominates the interior of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, is smaller than what was in the heart of Don Bosco. In his original plan, Don Bosco wanted to include, in addition to the apostles, some martyrs, prophets, virgins and confessors; the great victories of Mary through history, and peoples from various parts of the world. The painter convinced Don Bosco that such a painting would be enormous and would not fit into the basilica. Don Bosco resigned himself to that reality. Later, in 1891, Rollini painted the remaining parts of Don Bosco's ideas onto the dome. The missionary themes touching on the apostolic expansion of the Gospel are clear: the various categories of the faithful, the growth of the Salesian Family throughout the world (the first missionaries appear in Patagonia), the great missionary religious congregations. It shows us that "the heart of Don Bosco was as large as the sands of the seashore." The painting depicts Mary bringing the Church Triumphant and the Church Militant to a single universal praise of the Father. The invocation "Mary Help of Christians" seeks to embrace all peoples.

An exegesis of all the elements of the painting would require more space; we indicate only a few apostolic traces:

The image is a great tool of popular catechesis. There is good balance and harmony, dominated by the Trinity, the sky and the triumphant church; and in the lower part, the basilica, the Oratory and the Superga. The sky is reddish and predicts a storm. This detail presents our mission with an Oratorian heart, which is to be carried out among young people in the midst of great challenges, but with the assistance of our Mother.

There are diverse symbols in the image of Mary: the vertical element - the child in her arms, the stars, the identification with Mary Immaculate, the golden crown, the sceptre. The star in the crown reminds us of Stella Maris, who guides the sailor to a safe harbor, inviting us to launch the nets into the deep. The sceptre, in addition to its value, reminds us of the sceptre of the "Pastorella", which is equivalent to the staff of the Good Shepherd. The Child she offers the world has his arms wide open, hinting at traces of the spirituality of our Preventive System: a Jesus who smiles and welcomes, rather than teaching and blessing (images of Jesus with a book, or holding the world in his hands, or blessing). But the most impressive missionary and apostolic characteristic is the circle of apostles and evangelists around the Virgin. Their presence indicates missionary life and martyrdom. Each apostle goes off to another place on earth with the Good News and gives his life for it. The instruments of martyrdom indicate this aspect. Among the apostles it is interesting to note the appearance of St. Paul, taking note of the faithful he sees: a fiery look that recalls his missionary adventure. Here is an "Goes forth" Church that lives its evangelical radicality.

A painting with a powerful missionary message

“THE YOUNG HELPED ME OPEN MY HEART”



I was born in Vietnam, in a diocesan parish, and I had the desire to be a priest. I read a biography of Dominic Savio and I loved the priest who had shaped his life. I was impressed by the film on Don Bosco. I said to myself, "That is the type of priest I would like to be." When I came into contact with Salesians I developed a missionary vocation. I arrived in Brazil at the end of 2014 to do my regency. During this period of 4 years I was in different universes and I enriched myself with various cultural, social and ethnic experiences. Arriving at Campo Grande (BCG), I was sent directly to a mission among the indigenous people. I could not speak Portuguese and even less so the language of the Xavante, the people of my "promised land". I was a deaf-mute at the mission. I

was the "other" in that community. It was a difficult but rewarding start of my missionary experience. I lived there a year and a half.

I started learning two cultures simultaneously: the "western" Brazilian culture and the Xavante culture. There were some moments of crisis due to the language problem, and I wanted to return home; I prayed and reflected, and then decided to stay. From that moment, when I decided to stay, I found the strength and desire to learn the "new" language and my life began to change in a positive way. The best part of my training in the Xavante mission was a period of living with the indigenous people. I attended an important cultural festival of the Xavante called "Wai-a". This celebration takes place only every fifteen years and I had the opportunity and joy of being a part of it. After participating in that festival, dancing and singing in the heat of the sun, without a shirt and without water, participating in this ritual with the young natives from the morning till 16:00, I was recognized as one of them.

After the period of my life in the Xavante village, I was sent to a city in Mato Grosso, where I took Portuguese lessons and helped in a social service. The work at this Salesian mission was very intense as it was in addition to my Portuguese lessons. Life was full of activities and challenges. I was tired, but not discouraged because my feeling was, "This is my vocation; here I am a son of Don Bosco." In this period I learned a lot from young people. They taught me not only the language, but also how to develop an open heart. Many of our young people already had one. They would ask me, "Do you need help?"; or "Can I help you?" And they invited me to their various creative pastoral activities.

Now I am in my second year of theology at Sao Paulo. This is a large community with people of many different cultures. We also have some missionaries among us - from Vietnam and Indonesia, as well as from various regions of mighty Brazil. This gives me a rich experience of Salesian life and I learn Brazilian culture from my brothers. On the other hand, life in such a large community is challenging because we are so many, and we cannot build a close relationship with everyone. Besides our studies, we are involved in the apostolate in some institutions and parishes. Since last year I go to an oratory frequented by hundreds of children and young people. I love that oratory because there I meet Don Bosco's favorites, the poor youth! With them, I feel happy in my Salesian vocation.

I leave two pieces of advice for young Salesians who want to be missionaries: the first - "Be more Salesian and live our Constitutions more closely, and you will already be a missionary! The second: live Salesian joy, the joy that comes from within, the joy that grows from our intimacy with Jesus Christ or, the smile that is nourished by deep roots. This joy of yours will help young people to overcome their challenges in life. Difficulties and defects are always there, but there is joy, too, and it is up to us to choose joy.

Joseph Tran Van Lich
Vietnamese missionary in Brazil



Witness of Salesian Missionary Sanctity

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

Saint Maria Domenica Mazzarello (1837-1881), co-founder, with Don Bosco, of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. In her role of animator, formator and guide of the community, she was endowed with a profound spiritual motherhood, truly seeking the best for people. "She fulfilled the office of superior with excellence in all respects: she was good, upright, wise and prompt. Prompt: that is, she did not hesitate to give a correction; rather, she did so forcefully, but in such a way as to leave in those who heard it the impression that she acted solely because of her desire for the greater good."

**For the Lay People of
the Salesian Family**



Salesian Missionary Intention

That they may have the creativity of Don Bosco, in evangelizing the Young people and the realities of the contemporary world in the light of current challenges.

The Salesian Family, in addition to numerous consecrated persons, is formed by many lay people, Cooperators, Past-Pupils, called to be light and salt in various secular realities. Let us pray for them, so that they may have the light and creativity of the Spirit to announce the Gospel.

