



Number 1

«Newsletter for Salesian Missionary Animation»

11 January 2009

Dear (Fr Rector, Mission Delegate)!

This year we are celebrating the 150th birthday of our Congregation. John Cagliero (1838-1926) was amongst the first four who accepted Don Bosco's invitation in 1854 to form the Salesian Society, and he was chosen to lead the first missionary expedition on 11 November 1875 to Argentina. So we would like to call this simple monthly animation tool *Cagliero 11*.

With *Cagliero 11* we are aiming to reach every Salesian community in the world to remind ourselves at least once a month to pray for all our missionaries ad gentes. As we are thinking of them, we remind ourselves that we are all called to be 'missionaries to the young'. In some provinces, on the 11th of each month a Mass is celebrated for missionaries, and they are prayed for. This little newsletter could be used for spiritual reading, or as a part of Vespers/Evening Prayer.

Towards the end of it you will also find the Salesian Mission Intention which follows the general and mission intentions of the Holy Father – all this can be found too in www.sdb.org.

The **Salesian Mission Sunday (DOMISAL)** for 2009 is an occasion for provinces to swap experiences and mission praxis. In each edition of the newsletter you will find material for mission animation in the provinces, and an excellent resource for these ideas and others is the Salesian Digital Library (<http://sdl.sdb.org>), which is accessible to everyone.

It is my fervent hope that *Cagliero 11* can help us keep the mission flame alight!

Fr Václav Klement, SDB
Missions Councillor

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Members of the 139th Salesian Mission expedition in front of St Paul's-outside-the-walls Basilica, Rome

Salesian Mission Intention January 2009

«For Salesians in all 31 provinces of Europe that they may have the faith and courage to be involved in Project Europe (GC 26,111) – through credible witness to the Gospel in personal and community living – in order to relaunch the Salesian charism in Europe»

for the general and missionary intention of the Holy Father cf. www.sdb.org

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How Don Bosco became involved in the missions



Telling us how Don Bosco, the evening of 29th January 1875, solemnly announced his decision to send a first group of missionaries to the Americas, historian Eugene Ceria, writes:

“surprise, amazement, enthusiasm followed for his listeners, who at the end broke into rapturous applause. In order to measure the impression on the listeners, we need to go back to that time, when the Oratory was not, as it is today, an international setting, and the Congregation still had that sense of being a family gathered simply around its Head. The reign given to imagination that evening suddenly led to limitless horizons, and instantaneously captured the grand notion that Don Bosco and his Work encompassed. One could truly say that for the Oratory and the Salesian Society a new moment in history had begun” (*Annals of the Salesian Society* I, 249).

We today, who have known [more than] a century of this missionary tale and are living in truly international settings, experience little surprise or enthusiasm. So I ask myself if we should not still be amazed, even more than they were a century ago, because we are now in a position to visualise that huge tree which grew out of that little seed planted in 1875. How can we explain how this young priest, thirty years of age, with a crowd of adolescents in train in the outskirts of Turin could have become, when he was sixty the founder of churches established by his sons way over there in America?

How does one explain how two missionary congregations founded in 1859 and 1872 explicitly to help young people at risk would be listed, a few decades later, amongst the most important missionary congregations in the Catholic Church? Did this all happen by chance or by some internal logic amongst factors that seem to have no link? “Beginning of a new story”, says Fr Ceria. Who knows if he shouldn't really have said: “Beginning of the real story of Don Bosco”?

For sure, to judge Don Bosco and his founding charism, we need to think about his entire life and effort. Don Bosco is a rather special founder. We should not confine him to that period of youthful foundation at Valdocco, as interesting and typical as that may be. He was a founder urged on by pastoral zeal and imagination, and never stopped founding new realities: in 1875, he sent out his first missionaries, but he also founded the Mary Help of Christians activity for adult vocations; in 1876, he set up the Salesian Cooperators; in 1877 he launched the Salesian Bulletin...so then, seen in all its entirety, what does the launching of Salesian missionary work mean? As part of the wealth of the Salesian charism, what does the missionary element mean? Let us suppose that Don Bosco had died at sixty rather than at seventy three, at the beginning of 1875, before being able to organise his first missionary expedition: what consequences would there have been then for the Salesian project? We can say: of course there would have been the Salesian Family, and it would have grown... but there would not have been that broad, lively Family that we now know.

I would like to try to show how missionary involvement, a constitutive element of our charism, represents the ultimate development of this charism, its fullness, and this is particularly why I have placed it in the broad context, highlighting its basic directions, which help us to trace out the face of the true Salesian.

(J. Aubry, *Rinnovare la Nostra Vita Salesiana*, 47-49)

A Missionary Speaks to Us

«...Don Bosco founded the Oratory and the Congregation... his principal motive was the salvation of the young, so all his effort and work was to save souls. ... If we want to be sons of Don Bosco, we need to seek every means possible to save souls. We too in the mission in Siu Chow, want to bring Christ to every soul around us. It is important to be in contact with the people through all kinds of works, to have schools which are well regarded by the people and the government. In 1950 in China the schools were full of children ... We carried out a real catechesis in Chinese, I used the catechism written by D. Zugno. The youngsters came of their own volition... we had many catechumens ... Each Salesian had his group of catechumens...there was a real flowering of things. ... I still teach catechism today to catechumens... if I were not catechising I would die!»

(Fr. Gaetano Nicosia, 92, missionary in China)