



HERE I AM, SEND ME!

Fr. Alfred Maravilla SDB, General Councilor for Missions

For many years now, every last Sunday of September the Rector Major presides at the missionary sends off at the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco. Due to the pandemic this year's sendoff of the 151st missionary expedition has been postponed to a later date.

Jesus is the Father's Missionary: He was sent by the Father; his life and ministry reveal his willingness to be sent and his total obedience to the Father's will (*Jn 4:34*). Jesus, in turn, draws us into his mission and sends us on a mission to the whole world. The Church's mission is to evangelise. Today she continues to send out evangelisers everywhere (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15) so that, through our witness of faith and the proclamation of the Gospel, people may come to know Jesus. Indeed, the missionary vocation in the Church is above all an ever new response to the Lord's question: "Whom shall I send?" This is an invitation to step out of ourselves, to get out of our comfort zones and make a free and conscious response to make ourselves totally available wherever the Lord will send us: "Here I am, send me!" (*Is 6,8*)



The Salesian missionary vocation is a participation in the Church's missionary nature (*Ad gentes*, 2). While every Salesian is called to live the missionary spirit, which is an essential element of Don Bosco's charism, some Salesians are called to be missionaries *ad externos* (outside one's own country or culture), *ad vitam* (as a lifetime commitment). The Salesian missionary vocation is a call within our common Salesian vocation. As such it needs prayer and discernment with the help of a spiritual guide. Thanks to Salesian missionaries since 1875, Don Bosco's charism is now present in 134 countries. Once ascertain one can write directly to the Rector Major making known his total availability wherever he will be sent.

Is the Lord calling you to be a missionary?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- ⇒ *Is God calling me to be a missionary?*
- ⇒ *How can we live Don Bosco's missionary spirit today?*



Every year since 1875, the departing missionaries received a very significant crucifix. Each of its elements represents a profound aspect of Salesian missionary spirituality.

The Cross

The first powerful symbol is the cross itself. Receiving the Cross carries with it many emotions and spiritual challenges. It centres missionary life in the person of Christ and in Christ crucified. It implies first receiving and then offering the great teaching from the Cross: the infinite love of the Father who offers the best of himself, his Son; the love to the end, of the Son, who, obedient and generous, surrenders himself to the Father's will for the salvation of humanity.

The Mission and the Cross

In traditional missionary iconography one sees frequently the figure of the missionary showing the cross to the people. That gesture, which to some people might seem a little naive, if not colonizing, means for us Salesians that "our highest knowledge therefore is to know Jesus Christ, and our greatest delight is to reveal to all people the unfathomable riches of his mystery" (*Salesian Const.* 34).

The Good Shepherd

The cross, according to Salesian charism, is lived in unlimited pastoral commitment. The Good Shepherd reveals Salesian Christology: pastoral charity, the core of the Salesian spirit, the attitude that "wins hearts by gentleness and self-giving" (*Salesian Const.* 10-11).

BEING A MISSIONARY FOR A MEANINGFUL LIFE



Ayubowan! (Long Life!)

I did my practical training as a missionary in Papua Guinea. I went back to the Philippines in 1996 for my theological studies. Ever since then, my desire to go back to the missions remained like a spark that keeps smouldering. Even as an aspirant I had always dreamt of going to the missions. It took me quite a while to give this burning desire a second chance to flare out into a bright flame. I feel that it has been worth the wait.

Finally, on 11 October 2015, as I celebrated the 25th year of my profession, my 15th year as a priest, and in the 45th year of my existence on earth, I once again took the courage to plunge into the deep waters of missionary life.

I flew to a small island called the “Teardrop of India”—Sri Lanka. I faced the challenges of a new culture predominantly influenced by Buddhism and Hinduism; adjusting to the food that is mostly “Devilled-Chilli-Red and Spicy” that burns the taste buds; tongue-twisting languages of Sinhala and Tamil that are essential for communicating with the locals; and making myself available to meet the increasing needs of the Vice-Province with regard to personnel, creative and sustainable apostolates, and one-hundred-and-one other demands—all requiring much patience, love and humility from one like me who is still trying to be a missionary.

More than “doing”, a lot of “being” is expected because, in the missions, I had to become once again like a small child learning everything for the first time. I learned too that, in the missions, “LOVE” is spelt “GIVE” —giving up my past life, my present desires, and my future plans for what the situation asks of me. This life is laden not only with demands; I also had some unexpected sources of real consolation. One day during a retreat that I was preaching, I asked a local Salesian-seminarian to envision himself 10 years later. He answered: “Father, I see myself as a Salesian priest...” and before I could interrupt, he continued “...but not as an ordinary priest, I want to be a Missionary Priest offering myself to go to a far-away place ... because I want to live a meaningful life”. Hearing this, I smiled and said to myself, “... after all, there is really something more than all these ...”.

To those dreaming to go to the missions I say: **being in a mission territory does not automatically make one a missionary. Being a missionary is a process and it takes time ... take that from a person trying so hard to be one.**

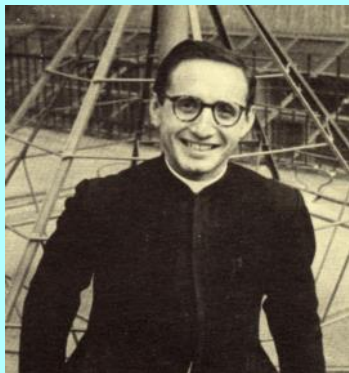
Jesu Phitai! (May Jesus Bless You!)

Noel Sumagui philippine missionary in Sri Lanka

Witness of Salesian Missionary Sanctity

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

September - the Venerable Don Giuseppe Quadrio (1921-1963), professor of theology in Turin-Crocetta. He often went to visit the youngsters in the juvenile prison of Generala. He wrote them once: “Spring will come after winter; do not be sad and desperate, you who are behind bars! There is hope for all. We all make mistakes, but those who made mistakes can make up for them. And those who have reformed can look people in the eye without shame. For a young man who wants to restart, it is never too late. Remember: you are not a wreck, but salvaged material. Friends, have faith in yourself and in God: He wants you to recover, and to make you honest and happy men. You are young; there is still a tomorrow for you, a serene and wonderful tomorrow. The last thing you lose must be hope and good will.”



For our Common Home



Salesian Missionary Intention

So that the planet's resources are not plundered; instead, shared fairly and respectfully .

In line with Laudato Si, Salesians held the Conference “Energy Forever”. It proposed urgent progress towards the use of renewable energy. We pray that the Salesian Family will actively put itself at the service of the Common House with concrete and urgent actions.

