



Publication of the Missions Sector for the Salesian Communities and Friends of the Salesian Mission

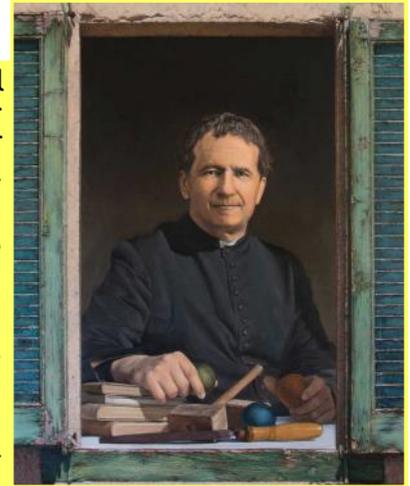
A VISION OF HOPE

We are living in a world that has broken down most barriers to travel and communication. The social media has created a truly global village where physical space is not anymore a hindrance to being connected. But several new crises have made us also more aware of our human frailty. A strong pagan mentality is pervading society with the belief that science and technology can on their own overcome all evil. God is superfluous. On the other hand, populist politicians have tapped into the simmering discontent with their economic woes to blame them on immigration and a globalised economy as the reasons for their being left behind. Indeed, today many men and women feel disappointed, disoriented and weary. They experience a dimming of hope. And one without hope lives a meaningless and unbearable life.

Similarly, the disillusion of believers with our socio-political situation, with Church leaders and with themselves, are translated into small-mindedness, a 'tomb psychology' which is expressed through 'the grey pragmatism of daily life', discouragement and inner weariness (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 83).

These, in turn, slowly consume all zeal to live one's faith radically and to share the gospel.

Don Bosco faced numerous adversities, but he never closed the window of hope! Living the missionary spirit today means always keeping wide open our window of hope. Indeed, only the person with a vision of hope is able to see that signs of hope abound today, even amid the contradictions of our time: the generous availability of many young people to serve others; the commitment to promote solidarity and human dignity; authentic holiness of so many men and women, lived in the hiddenness of ordinary daily family and professional lives. It is Christian hope that sustains our joy in bearing witness to the gospel with our lives. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of hope! Indeed, we are bearers of hope because we believe that the Spirit of God continues to renew the face of the earth: "Behold I make all things new!" (Rev 21, 5).



FOR REFLECTION

Do I have a vision of hope?

What are the signs of hope we see around us?

Fr. Alfred Maravilla SDB

General Councilor for Missions

The Congregation is present in the world in **134 countries**: Africa: 43; America: 24; Asia: 29; Europe: 32; Oceania: 6 (2020 data). In the last 20 years the Congregation has sent an average of 30 missionaries **each year**.

Particular religious contexts. The phenomenon of religious diversity as well as multicultural difference is gradually becoming more transversal and not only geographical.

a) Islamic context (26): Our presence in a country of Muslim majority, where our charism is at the service of young people as evangelical witnessing and inter-religious dialogue: this is the reality, particularly in the countries of MOR (Middle East) province.

In the Arab-Muslim context we have Syria, Palestine and Egypt; in the Jewish-Muslim context we have Lebanon and Israel. They all have characteristics of a presence of initial proclamation. The new presences in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates could be added to these; so, too, the countries of North Africa: Morocco and Tunisia. In the Asian context with very different characteristics are the presences in Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Turkey. In the European context: Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. In a South Saharan African context: Burkina Faso, Chad, Gambia, Guinea Conakry, Mali, Senegal, Serra Leone and Sudan;

b) Buddhist context (11): In Cambodia, China, Korea, Japan (Buddhism - Shintoism), Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Taiwan, Vietnam;

(c) Context of Orthodox Christianity (11): Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Ukraine.



MISSIONARY TO GIVE HOPE BACK TO YOUNG PEOPLE

My missionary vocation is little special. I was not so eager to work outside of my Salesian province (AFC). However, I found fulfilment in my work as a Salesian in South Sudan between 2012 to 2014, for my practical training period. That was a special experience that boosted my missionary heart.

This is how, after my priestly ordination in 2018, I did not hesitate at all to respond positively to the call of the congregation (at the proposal of my provincial) to serve the poorest young people in the Palabek settlement in Northern Uganda. I took this assignment as a natural continuation of my south Sudanese experience, as our refugees in Palabek are mainly from South Sudan.

As a missionary in Palabek, challenges are legion. Our young people lack practically everything: Education, health care, spiritual care, food... But the challenge that hits you on the jaw is when you realize that you are dealing with people who have lost all hope and meaning in life.

My greatest joy, what I consider my biggest achievement among these young people of Palabek, is when I see them smile again. Don Bosco has brought back smiles to the faces of desperate human beings, who are the privileged children of God.

What would I say to Salesians whose hearts are burning with that special call of a missionary vocation? "We really find Jesus in ourselves by giving him to others, especially to those who have lost everything."

*Father Roger Mbayo,
from RD Congo missionary in Uganda*



Witness of Salesian Missionary Sanctity

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

Bartolomeo Blanco Márquez (1914-1936), layman, Salesian Cooperator. Bartolomeo was born in Pozoblanco in the province of Cordoba (Spain); in 1930 he attended the local Salesian college; in 1932 he was elected secretary of the Youth of Catholic Action. After completing his specialization at the Workers' Social Institute, he devoted himself entirely to the promotion of Catholic social teaching, as a delegate of the Catholic Trade Unions. He was a committed Christian, giving serious testimony of a deep inner life and a generous dedication to the social apostolate; a Christian who fought for Gospel values, even in those activities that could appear to be political. He was arrested as a Catholic leader on August 18, 1936. He prepared himself for death with intense piety. He never lost his serenity and good humor. He was an edification to all. Condemned on September 29, he was shot to death on 2 October, as he cried out, "Long live Christ the King!"



For the new missionary frontiers in Oceania



Salesian Missionary Intention

May the Salesian charism embrace many more islands and serve the young people who still wait for Don Bosco's presence among them

In Oceania, Salesians are present in 6 countries, but there are new requests from Vanuatu, Tonga and Pago-Pago. We pray that the Lord will send us the necessary personnel and the indispensable fervour for the new missions

