



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



### Dear friends,

This month we celebrate the greatest feast of all: Easter.

At the center of our faith stands a simple yet explosive truth: Christ is risen. This single event reshaped the world and sent ordinary people to do extraordinary things. From an empty tomb began a mission that still moves us today.

Easter is not just a memory of the past; it is a living fire in the heart. It is the joy that refuses to remain private. Like Paul and the first missionaries, we are compelled to cross boundaries—geographical, cultural, and personal—with one message: Jesus is alive.

Why do we go?

Why do we remain missionaries, even when the road is long and demanding?

Because Easter joy burns within us. May this joy fill our everyday life—in our mission, in our communities, in our friendships—from morning to night. May our lives quietly proclaim what we believe with all our hearts: Christ is risen. Truly risen.

*Sathish Paul*

■ Fr. Sathish Paul SDB, Member of the Social Communication Sector

## Do we pray for our priests?

In the Church and in the Salesian Family, we pray a lot for young people, especially the poorest. And that is very good. They are our "mission field". But sometimes we forget to pray for those who support this ecclesial and Salesian mission with silent and sacrificial dedication: the priests.

Pope Leo invites us this month to pray for priests, especially those who are going through hard and difficult times in their vocation and ministry. During this month, **let us pray insistently for those priests who are experiencing moments of fatigue, loneliness, crisis or silent suffering.** I think of those who live in the missions, where distances are enormous, resources are scarce, and responsibilities are abundant. They have to celebrate the sacraments, form communities, educate and evangelise, and carry out projects. They encourage, listen, and heal. They have divine grace, the "grace of state," it is true, but **they are also fragile: they are human beings, they are sensitive.** Like all of us, they have their stories and their crises. Sometimes they feel hurt, misunderstood, judged, unheard.

Let us pray for them. Let us approach them and whisper a word of support in their ear. Praying for priests who suffer makes us more missionary because, by supporting them, we support the mission of the Church. **Let us accompany them with closeness and affection,** asking the Lord to grant them health, joy and fidelity. Because, in the end, when they feel loved and supported by our prayer, the Church breathes new air, the heart expands and the mission reaches further.

■ Fr. Jorge M. Crisafulli SDB, General Councillor for the Missions

### FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

- Is there a priest who has made a mark on your life? Have you ever thanked him or prayed for him?
- We often ask priests to pray for us — but when did you last pray for a priest who might be struggling?



## APRIL SALESIAN MISSIONARY INTENTION

GUATEMALA



## PRIESTS

For the priests in crisis

[Prayer intention of Pope Leo XIV]

Let us pray for priests going through moments of crisis in their vocation, that they may find the accompaniment they need and that communities may support them with understanding and prayer.

[Salesian missionary prayer intention]

# A LAY PERSPECTIVE ON SUPPORTING PRIEST IN CRISIS



*Dear Lauren, from your experience in Church and Salesian pastoral work, what factors or situations can lead a priest into a moment of crisis in his vocation? What pressures or challenges do you see that make priests particularly vulnerable?*

The challenges of ministerial life are many. It is a constant outpouring of oneself for the service of God and the service of other. The world feels to be intensifying, and the rhetoric of division and fear is increasing. The problems facing young people, and therefore the work required, is overwhelming. We must constantly work towards cultivating peace and interior freedom that is not impacted by the world spinning around us.

*The prayer intention speaks of "accompaniment" and "understanding" that priests in crisis need. From a lay perspective, what concrete ways can communities (parishes, Salesian family, individual faithful) accompany and support a priest going through difficulties?*

We are all human. A mistake that I have made many times is putting a priest on a pedestal and forgetting their humanity. We are all in this Salesian journey together, it is important that accompaniment be mutual – sometimes it is the priest who will accompany and other times the laity need to accompany the priest. The most important way to accompany someone is through listening. We need to actually express: "I am here, I care for you, I have time for you, and I am ready to listen." Often, we assume "they know I am here if they need me", however, when someone is in crisis verbalising this and assuring them of our support and prayer is important.

*Looking at prevention, what could help priests avoid falling into crisis in the first place?*

A moment of crisis can be a gift from God. Every moment of our lives, every interaction can be viewed as moment of learning about ourselves, the world and about God. I think it is not that we are trying to avoid crisis so much as we have the steadfastness, faith and serenity to handle the crisis when it comes. On a practical level for priests, the way to prepare is for faithful devotion to the most important things in priestly life – the Eucharist, the importance of prayer and meditation, spiritual direction. If these things are cultivated on a day-to-day basis, then when the crisis comes the priest already has practices to support the pathway forward. I do not think we try to prevent crisis as they can be the most important part of life.



Lauren Hichaaba

I have worked with the Salesians of Don Bosco in the **Australia-Pacific (AUL) Province** for 18 years. I am the Director of the Cagliari Project, the Salesian Mission Volunteer Program for the Province and I'm also the **Delegate for Missionary Animation**. My degrees are in Theology, Drama, Education and International Development. There are many important roles in my life but the most important is as **mother to my three beautiful children** and adopted niece and nephew from Zambia. Our house is like a crazy oratory - and I love every minute!



## Why are the Catholic priests leaving the priesthood?

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**Celibacy and loneliness** – profound loneliness, emotional isolation, and the desire for intimate companionship and family life

**Identity and role confusion** – growing tension between what they imagined priesthood to be and the daily reality

**Institutional disillusionment** – disillusion with Church's issues of governance, lack of transparency, clericalism, and the handling of the abuse crisis

**Psychological and emotional burnout** – being constantly available, managing conflicts, covering multiple parishes—lead to exhaustion and burnout

**Theological and doctrinal doubts** – serious doubts about specific Church teachings, particularly on sexuality, gender, and authority

**Lack of support and accompaniment** – feeling unsupported by their bishop or religious superiors, with little meaningful fraternal community, spiritual direction, or ongoing formation after ordination

Source: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University