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newsletter for Salesian
Missionary Animation



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Dear Friends,

Missionary work starts with encounter and listening, as Don Bosco exemplified.

Technology and social media powerfully aid communication and evangelization, reaching youth swiftly, sharing the Gospel widely, and bridging distances. Yet, in true Salesian fashion, nothing replaces personal encounter.

An elderly missionary told me: "Youth may be stirred by videos, projects, or online messages, but they remember when we listened, called them by name, played with them, and walked beside them." These acts build trust, friendship, and openness to God.

This is Salesian communication: presence. Don Bosco won hearts through friendship, kindness, joyful company, and the Oratory's family spirit—then educated toward Christ. Today, digital tools are valuable, but human closeness comes first.

Youth seek not just information, but understanding, welcome, and companionship. Before every post or project, prioritize a heart ready for encounter.

Dear friends, wield technology wisely, but centre our mission on Salesian encounter—like Don Bosco—with presence, kindness, and love for the poorest youth.

■ Fr Fidel Orendain SDB
General Councillor for Social
Communication

Human beings: respect for human life



The Church has always taught the defence of human life at every stage. The Catechism of Catholic Church reminds us that every human life is precious because **it comes from God**. Christians are therefore called not only to avoid harming life, but also to defend, nurture, and promote the dignity of every human person. Every human life is a sacred gift, created by God in his image and likeness, and destined for eternal life. Human dignity does not depend on age, health, wealth, race, origin, religion, or ability. Every person deserves respect, protection, and love from conception until natural death — a truth the Church continues to proclaim. Our Salesian Constitutions invite us to educate the young in a way that promotes the full growth of human life. Our way of **educating and evangelizing according to a plan for the total well-being of the person directed to Christ** is undoubtedly our contribution to the defence of human life.

Respect for human life is present in every culture, belief, and tradition. In Melanesia, for instance, life is understood as shared, protected, and celebrated within the community. The birth of a child is welcomed with joy, while the elderly are regarded as sources of wisdom and blessing. Yet modern challenges threaten the dignity of life. Poverty, family breakdown, domestic violence, tribal conflicts, abortion, neglect of the elderly, substance abuse, human trafficking, environmental destruction, and growing inequality place human life at risk. Defending life today means opposing these conditions so that people may live with dignity. As educators, **we are called to be a voice for life**. This includes:

- Protecting unborn children and supporting mothers and families.
- Caring for the sick, disabled, elderly, and vulnerable.
- Educating young people to peace, justice, and fight against corruption.
- Defending women and children from abuse and exploitation.
- Caring for creation, because environmental destruction harms human life.
- Standing against substance abuse and violence.

A society that respects human life becomes peaceful, just and hopeful. When life is treated as sacred, communities grow stronger, families become more united, and future generations can live with dignity and faith.

■ Fr Moïse Paluku SDB, Don Bosco Youth Centre, Port Vila, Vanuatu

FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

- Which of the six points listed do you feel is closest to your daily mission? Which one, on the other hand, challenges you the most?
- In your experience, which groups of people are at risk of being forgotten or overlooked?



UKRAINE: LIFE GOES ON DESPITE THE WAR

Dear Hryhorii, this month we are praying for respect for human life. You live in Ukraine, a country torn apart by war. Is it possible, in such circumstances, to live in a way that respects human life?

Despite the danger and death we face every day, people are very organised and carry on with their lives. They continue to work, to dream, and to help others. Many volunteer groups have sprung up to assist both the military and refugees: reception centres that organise food, clothing and work for those fleeing the front line. They continue to support the families of fallen soldiers, offering comfort to mothers and children who have lost loved ones at the front.

There are volunteers who enter war zones with evacuation teams to rescue people who have been trapped, risking their own lives. Even 5 or 10 kilometres from the front line, there are people repairing roads, electricity, water and gas supplies — despite everything. People continue to respect life and fight for it, supporting those who have lost their will to live to help them move forward. This applies to the entire Ukrainian people.

Who are the people most at risk, and are the Salesians able to help them in any way?

We Salesians have been welcoming refugees into our communities since the war began in 2022. We run a centre called Mariapolis, 'the City of Mary', where more than a thousand people evacuated from the front line are living. We provide food, help them find work and integrate into the community in Lviv. More than nine refugee families have been living in our community near Lviv since the conflict began.

In our province, there are two military chaplains: myself and Fr. Oleh. He serves in the Dnipropetrovsk region of Ukraine, an area cut off by the enemy, while I work in the Donbas, between Kramatorsk and Sloviansk. Fr. Oleh also collaborates with the Salesian VIS, providing material, financial, medical, and spiritual support throughout the Dnipro area. Both of us live and work under constant risk to our lives.

I am always with the lads — a month to a month and a half spent almost on the front line. I drive, evacuate the wounded, and offer spiritual and mental support. I have a regular group of five or six young soldiers for whom I have become the chaplain of reference. It is a wonderful experience, but a risky one, because we are right where the fighting is taking place.

Where do people in Ukraine find hope for the future?

Without understanding history, it is impossible to understand any answer. The Ukrainian people are tired of their eastern neighbours, who appropriate our history and our most important figures, leaving us no peace and no economic, cultural or spiritual growth. Our greatest hope is to end this war so that we can break free from those who will not let us live.

The Ukrainian people are fighting for the future with hope, because we have always been optimistic, creative, full of life and dreams. We are afraid of nothing — not work, not difficulties, not enemies. We always move forward, and this gives us great hope that one day we will be a free country, known throughout the world, and we will be happy.



Don Hryhorii Shved SDB

Born in **Ternopil**, Ukraine, he decided to become a priest after finishing school and found out about the Salesians, whom he met in **Lviv**. He spent the first five years of his training in **Slovakia**, followed by three years in **Turin-Crocetta** and Rome. Since 2014, he has been living in the community of Vynnyky, 5 km from Lviv, where he works as a **military chaplain**. Another military chaplain in the UCR province is his fellow brother **Oleh Ladnyuk**.



JULY SALESIAN MISSIONARY INTENTION

HUMAN BEING

For respect for human life

[Pope Leo XIV's prayer intention]

Let us pray for the respect and protection of human life in all its stages, recognizing it as a gift from God.

[Salesian missionary intention]

CAMBODIA





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THE SUFFERING OF THE PEOPLE IN UKRAINE

