

TWOTHOUSANDTWENTYFOUR
SALESIAN MISSION DAY

Builders of Dialogue



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INTRODUCTION and EXPLANATION of the POSTER

For **2024 Salesian Mission Day**, as a fruit of collaboration between the Sectors for Missions and for Formation, the theme of dialogue (“Builders of Dialogue”) was explored.

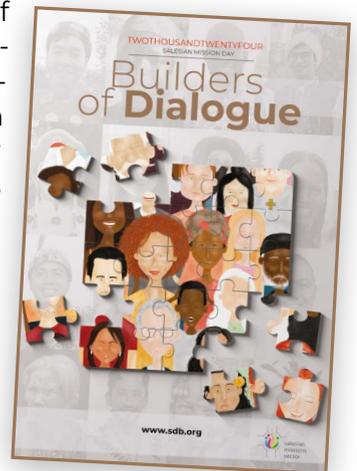
The booklet is full of interesting insights that help us reflect on how we can build dialogue in the various areas of our lives, from family to specific formation to community, presenting experiences from around the world and from different perspectives: intercultural, intergenerational, congregational...

The life of the Venerable Simon Srugi offers us a striking example of dialogue, Valdocco is presented as a workshop of intercultural dialogue, the encounter with the Samaritan woman, recounted in John’s gospel, shows us Jesus’ way of dialogue. The ‘Bosco Food’ project, carried out by the Missions Sector for some years now, focuses on cooking as a bridge for dialogue between cultures.

The project chosen for this year is the construction of a playground for children in Lushnjë, Albania.

All the work is accompanied and fulfilled by prayer, the true source of dialogue.

In the poster, the puzzle conveys the meaning of building, in which the presence of everyone is fundamental: men, women, young people, the elderly, lay people, consecrated persons. Everyone can make their own contribution according to their own status and culture: the many ethnic groups that enrich the world make it possible to discover and appreciate the beauty of diversity and to learn how to listen. All this allows the creation of something new that flourishes, precisely, in dialogue. The fundamental part of dialogue, even before speaking, is being there, the Salesian sacrament of presence: being present with enthusiasm and making oneself available to the other.





A WORD from the COUNCILLOR for FORMATION



Fr. Ivo Coelho SDB
General Councillor for Formation

The theme for this year's Salesian Mission Day (SMD) is **"Builders of DIALOGUE"**.

When we look at the source of our Salesian Missionary Vocation, we realize that dialogue is rooted in the reality of the Triune God himself. God reaches out to us and invites us to respond in freedom. From this dialogue of call and response comes the meaning and the strength for the mission to which he sends us. Our missionary vocation is a relational reality that is dialogical.

We find the first manifestation of this dialogical and relational reality in the bosom of our family. There is where we learn to relate and dialogue, with our parents, our brothers and sisters, our relatives, whether older or younger. The circle of dialogue soon expands beyond our family to embrace the school, the Church, and our society.

All these experiences influence our mindsets and determine how we dialogue with others. We learn to overcome the blocks and build on the strengths, learning to dialogue with respect for self and the other, patiently and trustingly. We know that dialogue is God's way with us and the way he wants us to be. We believe in Jesus' mission: to bring together the scattered children of God.

May this year's Salesian Mission Day help us realize first of all how deeply dialogue is part of what it means to be missionary disciples of Jesus. May it be one more stepping stone in the effort to build a culture of dialogue. May we continue to draw inspiration from the family spirit that Don Bosco created in Valdocco and that he left us as a precious heritage.





Salesian Mission Day 2024

Being builders of **DIALOGUE** today

Salesian Mission Day (SMD) was launched in 1988 as an opportunity for the whole Salesian Congregation to strengthen its missionary spirit. The first recipients are the Salesian community and the Educative and Pastoral Community (EPC), then the youth and all who belong to the Salesian Family. The SMD is not necessarily a one-day event; it is important to offer an educational and pastoral process, of which SMD is the culminating point, as an expression of the missionary spirit of the whole EPC. Each Province chooses the date or period that best suits its own rhythm and calendar in order to best experience this strong opportunity for missionary animation.

This booklet is addressed to Salesians and educators who wish to receive some hints for their own formation and animation of the SMD: it contains much material that a Province and EPC may decide to use in different ways, or by taking only parts of it. The SMD poster helps visualize the theme and makes it clear to everyone, so it is important that it be given a prominent place in every Salesian house.

The videos are available on the Missions Sector social channels:



FACEBOOK

Settore per le Missioni Salesiane



INSTAGRAM

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YOUTUBE

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Builders of Dialogue

The work for the realisation of the SMD materials, under the guidance of the Sector for the Missions, involved many people from different Provinces all over the world and this year involved the special collaboration of the Formation Sector.

Let's Pray

Missionary activity springs from, and is sustained by, the encounter with God. All members of the EPC contribute through prayer accompanied by sacrifices made for Salesian missionaries and missionary vocations. Every 11th of the month is an occasion to pray in the light of the monthly Salesian Missionary Intention or through the specific SMD prayer.

Let's support a Project

For the SMD, a project is proposed to all the communities, not just to raise money but as an educative experience of concrete solidarity for young people.

Let's Evaluate

The evaluation after the SMD is as important as the preparation and celebration. Consideration should be given to how the SMD was able to foster and promote a missionary culture in the local or provincial community through the year's proposed theme, considering suggestions for improvement in the future.



1988

Guinea:

The dream continues

1989

Zambia:

Project Lufubu

1990

Timor Leste:

Young Evangelisers

1991

Paraguay:

Street children

1992

Peru:

Christ lives on the Inca trails

1993

Togo: Don Bosco and Africa - a Dream Come True

1994

Cambodia:

Missionaries, Builders of Peace

1995

India:

In dialogue to Share the Faith

1996

Russia:

Lights of Hope in Siberia

1997

Madagascar:

Young Man, I say to You, Arise

1998

Brazil:

Yanomami
New life in Christ

1999

Japan:

The Difficult Proclamation of Christ

2000

Angola:

Gospel, Seed of Reconciliation

2001

Papua New Guinea:

Walking with Young People

2002

Missionaries Among Young Refugees

2003

Commitment for Human Promotion in the Mission

2004

India: Arunachal

Pradesh The Awakening of a People

2005

Mongolia:

A New Missionary Frontier

2006 - 2007

The Salesian Mission in Sudan

2008

HIV/AIDS: The Salesians' Answer - Educating for Life

2009

The Salesians' Answer - Educating for Life
Missionary animation - Keep Your Missionary

2010

Europe:

The Salesians of Don Bosco walk with the Roma-Sinti

2011

America:

Volunteers to Proclaim the Gospel

2012

Asia: Telling the Story of Jesus

2013

Africa:

Journey of Faith

2014

Europe:

We are the others - Salesian attention to Migrants

2015

Lord send me! - Salesian Missionary Vocation

2016

Come to our aid! Initial Proclamation and the New Frontiers in Oceania

2017

... And they stayed with us: Initial Proclamation and the Indigenous peoples of America

2018

Whispering the Good News. Initial Proclamation and Vocational Training in Asia

2019

"Without knowing it, they hosted angels." Initial Proclamation among Refugees and IDPs in Africa

2020

Europe: Initial Proclamation through Oratories and Youth Centres. "Rejoice..."

2021

One Father, One Family - Missionary Solidarity as Initial Proclamation

2022

Communicating Christ Today.
#MissionariesOnline

2023

Care of creation: our mission

2024

Builders of dialogue



In **DIALOGUE** with **GOD**, **gift of self** in **service**

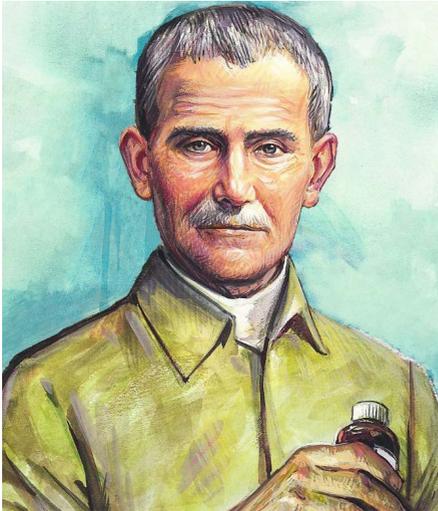
VENERABLE SIMON SRUGI



Fr. Gabriel De Jesús Cruz Trejo SDB
Salesian Postulation

Little Simaàn (Simon), son of Aazar-es-Srugi and Dàlleh Ibrahim el Khàuali was born on April 15, 1877 at Nazareth in Palestine. Simon's father was a saddler, he made leather goods (the family name Srugi actually means "saddler" in Arabic), but soon after his marriage he opened a grocer's shop to provide for his family.

His father died when Simon was only three years old; five years later his mother also passed away. There were many orphans in Palestine. Father Antonio Belloni, an Italian priest of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, began to take care of them as a father, a true father, and became the "Abuliataina", that is, the father-of-orphans. He



found a Congregation dedicated to the Holy Family, to shower those who had been deprived of love from their childhood with affection. Simon Srugi, too, who was then almost 12, arrived at Bethlehem on December 8, 1888. A priest of the Holy Family Congregation was passing through Nazareth. Simon's paternal aunt was afraid that her little nephew might be taken into a protestant orphanage and entrusted him to the priest.

At Bethlehem, in Fr. Belloni's

home, Simon felt great. Boys there could learn a trade and all the skills which, at that time, were reserved for a few privileged boys. Fr. Belloni's past pupils were good Christians and citizens, well prepared to face life.

In 1890 the first Salesians arrived from Italy; on August 25, 1894, Simon arrived from Bethlehem for his preparation for Salesian life. He seemed frail, of medium height, with lively black eyes, a piercing glance, a rather weak voice, was mild and good-natured, but not at all timid. He was always kind, humorous and smiling.

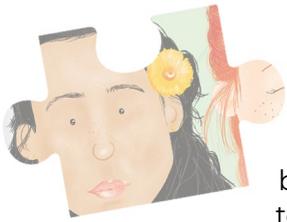
They soon called him the "Dominic Savio" of Beit Gemal. On July 27, 1895, he was admitted to the novitiate. It was his

love, animated by apostolic zeal, which was the surest sign of his spiritual maturity. Simon had discovered from the very beginning that life was a gift we must offer to others out of love for God; that love was the essence of Christian life. On October 31, 1896, Simon Sruji made his religious profession and, so, became a Salesian brother. After this, Simon's life was one of continuous dedication, without discouragement and without change of mind.

The terrible 1914-1918 war arrived in Beit Gemal. On August 23, 1915, the Palestinian Salesians, who had remained in the house, received the order to leave, on foot and at once, for Ramleh, a small town on the plains. There they were to be imprisoned. The boys, the superiors and the workers all set out in convoy in the summer heat. Sruji was with them. When they got permission to return, they found the house ravaged and had to work hard to begin all over again. The

Beitgemal, Israel – November 20, 1938 - Celebration for the beatification of Maria Domenica Mazzarello, co-founder of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA), in Beitgemal. Venerable Simone Sruji, SDB, second from the left, poses in front of the portico of the shrine of St Stephen, together with three Arab Salesians.





best period of Simon's life, when he was fully mature, began there after the First World War. He was asked to take total responsibility for the mill, which had just been given new machinery. His work at the mill placed him in the heart of the community and the surrounding people.

He was a true announcer of the Gospel. He respected the religion of those poor people but, at the same time, through a Christian life inspired by ardent charity, he made them feel the attractive beauty of Christ.

Srugi saw his job as a service to his brothers and sisters. "He did his duty out of love and not unwillingly. You could notice that whenever he was called, he responded immediately". "To do somebody a favour was almost a duty for him, as his love made him see God in his brothers and sisters."

They called him Muàllem, that is teacher. And "Muàllem Srugi" was indeed the man for good advice. When they asked him for advice, they were sure to get the right advice given for God's sake.



Betgamāl - A picture of the Salesian brother Sim'ān (Simon) Srugi, when he was in charge of the outpatient medical and nursing clinic attached to the Salesian house in Betgamāl. From the registers compiled by Srugi himself became acquainted with the medical service that was provided daily to dozens of sick people from more than 70 villages, some of them many kilometres away. The descendants of the patients Srugi helped and treated still remember him as 'the holy doctor of Betgamāl'.

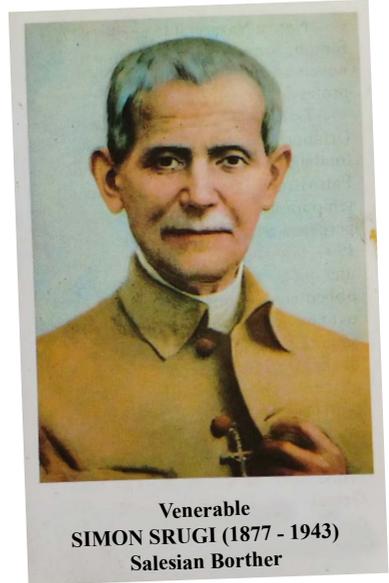
Muàllem Srugi, who was also the house nurse, became the good Samaritan of the entire area. From the nearby villages, a line of sick people would wind its way on foot, on camelback or on the hurried Palestinian donkeys. As time went by, their number increased to one hundred and twenty every day. Men, women, and children, with faces distorted by

pain, but with a ray of lively hope in their eyes. He was indeed a “tamàm”, that is a just and perfect man. The Muslims even called him a “nabi”, a prophet. Many times, they didn’t ask for medicines: a touch of his or a prayer was quite enough, and they went away satisfied.

Srugi had received the first hints of the approach of his Calvary in 1939. In that year a fit of malaria and double pneumonia took him to death’s door. He had to be taken to the French hospital in Bethlehem. It seemed that when he suffered his joy grew more obvious. An Arab assistant of his said of him: “His head was always filled with Paradise. He only thought of Heaven and that thought made even ‘sister death’ quite welcome. For Simon, death seemed, above all, to be a meeting with his Jesus.”

He recovered and went back home, but he turned his reflection more and more to Christ’s Crucifix. “The Crucifix must be your favourite book” he wrote in his “Thoughts”. He had returned from hospital, but he had difficulty in recovering his strength. He had other relapses. On the fifth of May he could not get up. As the illness seemed rather serious, he was taken to hospital once more. He recovered again, but he was so exhausted that he could hardly go upstairs.

Towards the end of 1943 the good Simon’s weakness was extreme. On 26 November he could hardly speak any longer. Night arrived. The nurse watched over him for a long time then, seeing him quiet, retired. When he returned towards 2 am, he found him immersed in a placid sleep, with his hands crossed on his breast. Forever. The first to rush to pay their last respects to Muàllem Srugi were the Muslim peasants, who loaded Srugi’s coffin onto their shoulders and took it in turn to the cemetery.



In 1993, Pope John Paul II declared Srugi “Venerable”.



In **DIALOGUE** with **TODAY'S TECHNOLOGY**

The challenge of Artificial Intelligence



Fr. Jaroslav Vracovský SDB
Ulaanbataar, Salesian Delegation of Mongolia



What is Artificial Intelligence (AI)? Do we need to be afraid of it? How can we make use of it? How can we use it on a pedagogical basis in our everyday life? These are topics which are discussed more and more around the world in recent times. And what about us Salesians? Are we aware of the changing world we are living in?

AI revolution

For centuries, people were thinking about human machines which can work and think as people. This idea became much clearer in twentieth century science fiction. For example, in 1921 Czech playwright Karel Čapek released a science fiction play “Rossum’s Universal Robots” which introduced the idea of “artificial people” which he named robots. This was the first known use of the word. Who could imagine that within a hundred years, his vision would become part and parcel of our everyday life!

In our modern age, AI is everywhere. It is part of how we navigate transportation, how we communicate, and where we get our entertainment, just to name a few. And AI continues to grow, becoming a more integral part of modern societies



by the day. Companies invest billions of dollars in the development of more advanced AI.

Although the idea of AI is not fully new, many people consider 2022/23 as a historical, because AI became widely accessible through ChatGPT (Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer). It is an artificial intelligence chatbot developed by OpenAI and launched on November 30, 2022. Until recently we did not think that AI would be able to compose a poem, write a review or draw a picture. While you are reading this, AI programs are drawing pictures of the cosmos, responding to emails, preparing tax returns, and recording heavy metal songs. They are writing pitch decks, debugging code, sketching architectural blueprints, and providing health advice.

AI generators

There is not only one AI, but many AI generators for different purposes. The above-mentioned ChatGPT is an example of *Text to Text* (T2T) generators. But there are more and more popular *Text to Image* (T2I) generators, such as Dalle-2, Midjourney or Stability.ai which allow you to generate art from text prompts. In the opposite direction *Image to text* (I2T) generators are able to analyse pictures and recognize different elements in them. You can generate music, make 3D images or video etc. in ways that we have never imagined.

Machine learning

Traditional programming is based on program code which is done step by step. But machine learning (ML), by contrast, is a way to allow AI to learn. Put simply, it is based on 3 steps. The first step consists of a lot of data collected from different sources. The second step is a data model trained to recognize patterns and the third phase is the tested model. There are many

sources to help us understand ML. One of many is for example <https://teachablemachine.withgoogle.com/>, where you can build your small data model, train it and use it in practice.



Start Worrying?

As useful as AI can be to our lives, there are growing concerns about its misuse. For example, in February 2023 Time magazine placed a screenshot of a conversation with ChatGPT on its cover, writing that “The AI Arms Race Is Changing Everything” and “The AI Arms Race Is On. Start Worrying”. Deep fakes, child pornography, influencing public opinion, elections and endangering democracy... There are so many things to worry about!

We Need to Raise AI Like a Child

Mo Gawdat, former CBO of Google X, is talking about 3 inevitable facts in AI's future. The first fact is that we cannot stop its development. The second inevitable fact is that in several years AI will be the smartest thing on the planet. He expects that by 2045, AI will be a billion times smarter than we are! In such a situation we cannot predict how the world will be. Are the AI machines going to eliminate us as a threat to the planet? And the third inevitable fact is, according to him, that during AI development some bad things are also going to happen. But every new discovery has positive and negative effects.

The response to our future is not to find out how to control the machines, restrict them with some program..., but to raise them like one of our children! The only way to deal with AI is to begin behaving as good parents who can teach these machines the values we want to care about.





A **DIALOGUE** that **LIBERATES** *Lectio divina* (Jn 4:5-42)



Dr. Paolo De Martino

*Contact Person for the Sector for Biblical Apostolate
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Jesus, master of our heart, shows us God's method of building dialogue through one of the richest and most productive stories of the Gospel.

This encounter seems like it could never have happened, but diversity rhymes with unity when it submits to the effort of building a relationship based on listening and dialogue.

The encounter takes place in Sicar, a place laden with history. Jesus is tired: it is midday, the sun is scorching, the road he has travelled weighs heavy on his legs. What tenderness arises in this God, tired of seeking humanity, exhausted, consumed by love.

Jesus speaks to her. He is thirsty, he asks her for the courtesy of having some water she has drawn from the well.

The woman stiffens, she has a sense of foreboding. She is absolutely right: we are about to witness a long courtship from God. In that culture, the well is a place for meeting, communication, chatting.



In the Bible, the well is the place par excellence of courtship and negotiation.

The woman is astonished and annoyed, she becomes defensive. There are two reasons for her astonishment: a male has the impudence to address her, and this male is also Jewish! No man could address a woman outside the home. If a man met his wife in the marketplace, it would have been appropriate not to greet her! The Jews and the Samaritans, in those times, had very poor relationships.

Courtship

Jesus begins his courtship (faith is the response to God's courtship) not by rebuking but by offering: "*If you knew of God's gift...*". The gift is the keystone of this love story, the load-bearing word of the sacred story. God does not ask, he gives; he does not demand, he offers. Jesus does not accuse her, he only invites her to become aware of her own emotional fragility. It is in this context of fragility that the dialogue takes place. She is a woman marked by pain – she is frigid, wounded. We understand her hostility: accustomed to too much gossip, she does not know that the one standing before her knows her inside out, without judging her.

"*I have no husband.*" The woman is honest, she does not lie. She accepts the challenge of this stranger, she puts herself on the line. What is he getting at? Why does he ask her about her husband? How does he know?



Courtship. 19th century

Jesus' answer is a masterpiece: he knows, he understands. He understands the woman's pain, he understands her bitter disappointments, he knows. It is not just a moral issue. Jesus does not accuse her, he only invites her to become aware of her own emotional fragility.

In such a delicate moment he emphasises the positive: "*You are right in saying...*". In the inner chaos of this poor woman, Jesus grasps a positivity: she is honest, transparent, she does not lie. He does not look for hints of guilt in the woman, he looks for clues of goodness and he highlights them: "*What you have said is true.*"

Who knows, perhaps this woman has suffered a lot, was perhaps abandoned and humiliated five times through being rejected. Perhaps her heart is scarred, hardened, sick. Jesus' gaze rests not on the woman's mistakes, but on her thirst for love and to be loved.

The woman, having left her water jar, runs to the city: someone "*has told me everything I have done...*". Her weakness becomes her strength, yesterday's wounds become windows for tomorrow's light to shine through. This is how she builds her testimony to God.

The water jar remains: by now the woman has discovered the unprecedented, what does she care? She runs to the village and calls out to the people fleeing from her, she shouts out her experience.

Dialogue

Jesus was a free man, and it was only because of this freedom that he was able to make wonderful encounters in his life. Being free means not allowing ideas, religious barriers, what is said or anything else to prevent us from encountering people and life.

Dialogue demands listening and makes the listener active because they know how to read the heart of the speaker and engage them with a word that does not force them into silence, but encourages them to discuss, and be committed.

We are all invited to work for a culture of dialogue.

It is a commitment that we must nurture every day, an invitation addressed to every woman and every man. Dialogue is built through an encounter with the other: it must be sought out, cared for, protected, cultivated.

Our commitment and our mission will be to be builders of dialogue, fostering a culture of welcome, closeness and mutual care.



DIALOGUE and LISTENING in the FAMILY



Alessandro Ricci

*Professor, psychologist and psychotherapist
Salesian Pontifical University, Rome*

We need to work on ourselves to learn how to really listen. To learn not to interrupt, to learn to suspend prejudice, to learn to really open the mind and the heart, to let the other into us, even before our ears. Today we live in a great paradox – we are always connected, we know everything about everyone, we post everything that happens to us... but no one listens.

The new media are causing listening to wither, in the sense that the ability to listen to those close to you, but also intimately to yourself, has died out. We live more and more in a self-centered and narcissistic world that has led us to finding it difficult to decentralize from our individualism and opening ourselves to genuinely listen to the other. Here, then, is the paradox of our mass media culture: in a world where it seems that everything contributes to improving conditions and lifestyle, to improving and increasing opportunities for communication and encounters between people, what emerges is a strong and profound lack of communication and an increasingly rampant superficiality in listening to self and others.

Listening always demands that we leave some room, empathetically welcome the other, devote time to them, offer genuine availability. Listening is not always easy, especially when a number of variables de-



termine the relationship. Haste, defiance, prejudice, non-recognition of roles and mutual devaluation; all put effective listening at risk.

Parents, too, cannot help but recognize and accept that the other is a You and as such represents not an object to be manipulated and managed, but a subject, the bearer of a richness and diversity that compels respect, and this arises, first of all, from an accurate perception and then from the ability to listen to the other's uniqueness.

First, then, listening means welcoming the thoughts, emotions of others, making oneself available to make room within oneself to accommodate the other in their wholeness. To be willing to listen means to welcome without prejudice, misunderstandings, judgments, evaluations, cognitive distortions, focusing one's attention on the communicated thought or experience and gently placing it within one's own being.

Parents with children are often hurried and distracted and do not pay attention to listening to them; they rely on, follow or fall into the traps of habits and fixed attitudes. Children have a great need for attention and to be listened to calmly and unhurriedly because they do not always communicate their thoughts and emotional states clearly. It is the parent's job to foster this communication by ensuring that they have the space and time for this to happen. With teenage children, the need for dialogue and deep understanding becomes more and more apparent. It is not uncommon to find children who erect a wall between themselves and their parents, refusing to communicate to them what they think and feel. It is very important for the teenage child to have the time and space to open up with their





parents to go through and overcome difficulties with their help but not their solutions. Dismissing their problems and neutralizing all their fears, paving their way and removing obstacles is unnecessary and counterproductive. It is more helpful to help them come up with their own strategies and solutions, respecting their own time.

If a child or young person feels free to express themselves (and not judged, scolded, counseled, threatened, etc.), then they are able to talk about themselves, about their mistakes, try to understand the causes and sometimes even find solutions. So, while listening means welcoming, listening is closely related to the parent's ability to be able to decentralize, temporarily setting themselves aside to focus fully and completely on the child. Really listening to them means putting yourself in their shoes or thinking back to their age. It means empathically feeling the problems they may be experiencing and giving dignity to emotions, even the strongest and most turbulent ones. In this way, we help them not to repress what is difficult to communicate and teach them that even negative experiences can be expressed and managed; but at the same time, we do not make them feel alone.

If to educate means helping the child to grow and develop in a harmonious and balanced way; if to educate means allowing the child to be who they are, helping them to manifest their intrinsic potential and constantly enhancing their special gifts; if educating means allowing the child to build their own life project, accompanying them in their historical and existential journey without substituting for them or deviously directing them toward pre-established goals, it is necessary to listen in order to get to know the child in an essential and real way, to read their needs, motivations, desires, expectations, and to obtain continuous and valuable feedback from them.



FORMING SALESIANS as BUILDERS of DIALOGUE



Br. Raymond Callo SDB
Salesian Formation Sector

Every Salesian of Don Bosco must have the capacity to dialogue. Such a capacity is essential for several reasons. First, for us the educative and formative relationship is a dialogical relationship. Second, we are called to be builders of community – whether it is the educative and pastoral community, or the religious community, or the community of human beings. The Salesian community, we recall, is an important part of the animating nucleus of the educative and pastoral community, which itself prepares young people to take their rightful place in the community of human beings.



The Preventive System as our style of formation

The Salesian of Don Bosco, we could say, needs to undergo a formation modeled on the Preventive System, where dialogue – personal, in group and in community – is the hallmark.

Our young Salesians are not just passive recipients. They are actively involved as agents of their own formation. In an increasingly digitalized world they are used to an interactive mode where they are active players. A new style of education and formation is therefore needed: a shift from a top-down style that is quick to judge and relies heavily on control and rules, to an egalitarian style that



involves much listening, dialogue, patience and participatory decision-making. We need an education and a formation that is able to touch the heart.

The way to the heart is through authenticity, transparency, listening, friendly presence. Discerning and deciding together is far more preferable to formation by diktat

The Preventive System is able to create bridges

across cultural gaps because of its capacity to value young people in everything that is unique and special about them. This means that to dialogue, respect and open ourselves up to the culture of the young is a *sine qua non* for encountering them where they are. Such an encounter opens the door for understanding their way of life and bridging the communication gap between the old and new generations and finding what unifies the virtual and the real. This is important because the first step is to know and understand the kinds of changes that are taking place in the world of young people and what the implications are for our apostolate.

This holds also for our young Salesians. The more they are exposed to a participatory style of formation, the more likely it is that our apostolic communities will move to a synodal form of governance where the emphasis is on fraternity. Involved here is a shift from a conformation model to the Preventive System as our style of formation.

Rectors and formators are invited “to strive to make themselves loved” – to create safe spaces where confidence and trust reign supreme and where true formation can take place.

Making dialogue a personal attitude

Fostering the capacity to dialogue means making it a personal attitude, a permanent attitude which not only fosters a participa-



tory and synodal approach to community building, to interacting with society, culture and the world in which we live, but most of all, a dialogue wherein discernment takes place. Our relationship with God is a dialogical reality.

The permanent personal attitude of discernment directs the decisions of ordinary life and pastoral options, both personal and communitarian. Every confrere and community are responsible for this constant openness to discernment. General Chapter 25 asks the community to help each confrere give unity to his life “by the practice of evangelical discernment as an attitude of searching for the will of God through community dialogue and coherent decisional and executive processes.” (GC25 32) And we know that “in listening to the Word of God and celebrating the Eucharist, we express and renew our common dedication to the divine will.” (SDB Const., 66)

Definitely, our capacity to dialogue and having it as a personal attitude is a lifetime process, we need an attitude of openness “[to] seek the will of the Lord together in patient brotherly dialogue, with a deep awareness of shared responsibility.” (SDB Const., 66)

Discernment also calls for other fundamental dispositions such as a faith vision, a healthy spiritual life, ability to listen, openness to conversion, capacity for personal and spiritual communication.

Community discernment includes also *pastoral discernment*, which becomes particularly important and relevant in the context of the EPC.

Becoming a point of reference for the charism

The Salesian community, in particular, is called to be “the charismatic point of reference” in the EPC. (GC25 70) Within the Salesian Family “we have particular responsibilities: to preserve unity of spirit and to foster dialogue and fraternal collaboration for our mutual enrichment and greater apostolic effectiveness.” (SDB Const., 5) Only then can a Salesian be a builder of dialogue in the religious community and in the EPC. Only then will we be able to expand our circle of influence in the Church and in the human family.

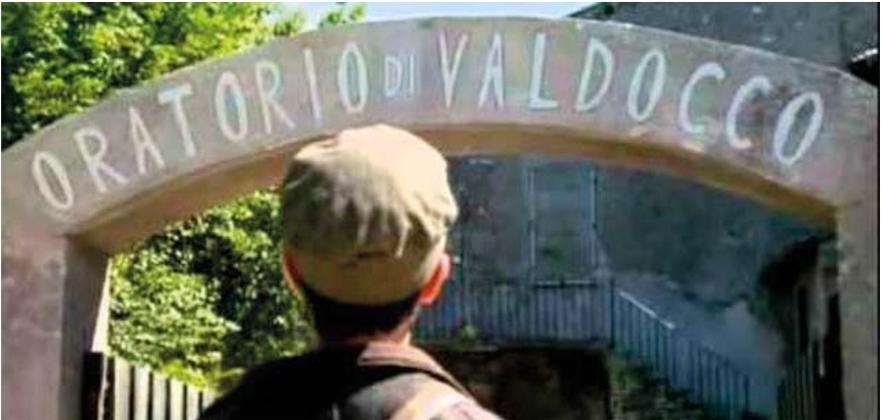


An **INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE LABORATORY**

The Valdocco Oratory



Fr. Jimmy Jean Muhaturukundo SDB
In charge of the oratory, Valdocco



It is true, Valdocco was not like this in Don Bosco's time: today the oratory is accessed from Via Salerno, through a green door, the gateway to the colonnade and the large courtyard; but it is precisely that doorway that has a special meaning. All the encounters and stories we witness pass through there. That door in fact represents the point where in 2023 Don Bosco met 'his Valdocco', which today is in the Aurora district, one of the most multiethnic and multicultural districts of Turin, with all that this entails! Those who walk through that door still experience that Don Bosco's first oratory is still by its very nature a place devoted to welcoming and educating young people and their families. Especially if they arrive from afar, in search of redemption and a future. Exactly as it was for Don Bosco.

During a normal midweek afternoon an average of 150 children and young people pass through the courtyard of the oratory, engaged in one of its activities or simply to play with friends on the football pitch. Many of the stories we hear are stories of migrant families, stories very similar in some respects, but extraordinary in their uniqueness. Almost all of them, however, come up against the necessity and difficulty of integration, due to two-way factors, the migrant family on the one hand, and the receiving society on the other. Migration difficulties are then often linked to the various faces of poverty, which affect the children's growth path.



Let me share a memory, in this regard, that for some reason I associate with “the little orphan of Valsesia”, the first one Don Bosco welcomed into his home right here in Valdocco. It was a warm September afternoon, and it was more or less 3 p.m. The Oratory had not yet opened, so it was strange for me to hear from the office a hand insistently knocking there. Seeing the insistence, I got up, opened it, and found myself in front of a non-Italian woman, two boys, evidently brothers, and next to them, a second female figure, who later introduced herself to me as the interpreter. She introduced me to the family in front of me (yes, the father was not there...) and told me that they had just arrived from Egypt. Not even a week ago. And that they were looking for ‘a place to start their life in Italy’. A reference point, someone who could help them integrate and feel at home again. She told me that she had been pointed to our front door. ‘Go to Valdocco, they will help you ... there it is, that main door!’ I listened amazed and moved. Then the interpreter left us. Immediately I looked for a way to converse with the two boys, who looked at me somewhat dazed. Unable to communicate with words, I took them inside and showed them the courtyard, obviously their eyes were enchanted by the large football pitch: it was



then that the older of the two brothers exclaimed “kura”. Sensing what it was about, I showed him a ball: he smiled, nodded, and repeated “kura”. In the meantime, it was time to open the oratory, so I encouraged them to go and play with the others who were ar-

iving, and after a moment of hesitation, they jumped onto the playing field. Thus began their adventure in the oratory. Before saying goodbye to them at closing time, we agreed by gesture that they would return, and they did return: the next day and the following days. We started individual Italian lessons, and after a short time we were able to include them in the after-school programme. Today they are oratorians ‘like so many’ and ‘like no one else’, and they are registered with Auxilium Valdocco as footballers!

Yes, it is one of those memories that has the flavor of those small daily miracles that happen in the oratory, in the informality of the courtyard, but here, believe me, perhaps it is because we are in the land of Don Bosco, the miraculous is truly daily! What we try to do from here on is to ‘shape’ the support that we want and can give to those who arrive at our door: for example, by translating into projects the answers to the various needs that arise, from that meeting and others like it, two ‘Literacy Workshops’ were born, one for non-Italian mothers and one for their children, and other projects aimed at social inclusion, and at combating school drop-out and educational poverty. Evidently, it is a team effort: educators, Salesians, animators, volunteers, etc. all work together.

What can we say? Don Bosco has sketched it out, and we lay down the colors! Or at least we try to. What is certain is that his presence is tangible, and his help powerful!



INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE

FMA missionaries ad gentes tell their stories



edited by **Sr. Anna Maria Geuna FMA**
*Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians –
Missions Sector*

Among the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the intergenerational dialogue between young sisters and long-time missionaries is well expressed in this quote by Pope Francis: *“Goodness always tends to spread. Every authentic experience of truth and goodness seeks by its very nature to grow within us, and any person who has experienced a profound liberation becomes more sensitive to the needs of others. As it expands, goodness takes root and develops. If we wish to lead a dignified and fulfilling life, we have to reach out to others and seek their good. (Evangelii Gaudium, 9).”*

In this regard, we wanted to interview some missionaries ad gentes who have spent a long time in different parts of the world: these sisters, in the silence of their daily work in so many years of mission, have given and continue to give their lives to the many forgotten people of different cultures, with commitment, courage, creativity, hope. Perhaps their lives do

Missionaries ad gentes
permanent training course



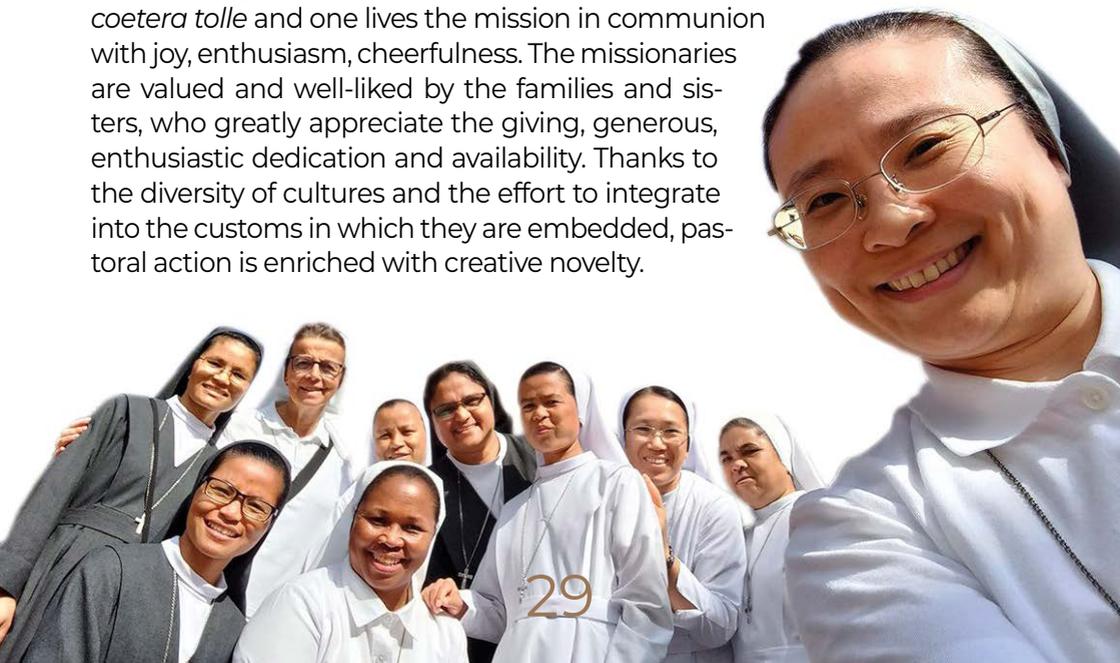


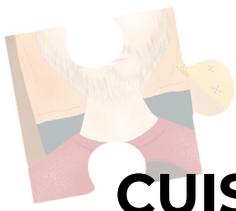
not make the news, books have not been written or articles published in news outlets, but they are women who through the power of love, courage alone attempt to transform death into life. Women, like so many others, who with determination have answered God's call to be missionaries ad gentes forever for 67, 62, 45, 32, 16 years there where God has called them to flourish.

In today's communities, intergenerational dialogue presents itself as a value, a richness to be lived and also a challenge, Sister Norma, an Italian missionary in Madagascar, tells us. The challenge can be overcome if one puts Jesus at the center of one's life and vocation, uniting all the needs of different ages to live fraternal communion. The long-standing missionaries brought the charism of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello to the lands to which they were sent; in them there is rooted in their hearts the value of welcome, which leads each missionary to accept culture not in a general sense but lived in relationship with each native sister. In Madagascar, no major problems are detected in intergenerational dialogue, although sometimes difficulties are encountered, related to human reality. It must be emphasized that each stage of life brings in its own riches and limitations, so mutual help is needed to ensure dialogue in communities. The senior missionary brings in the above dialogue wisdom, experiences and life witness to the young sisters, who in turn express apostolic ardor, youthful freshness, enthusiasm and optimism. The success of intergenerational dialogue is also linked to the person, whether elderly or young, his or her character, formation, and ability to welcome the other.

Sister Maria Fe, a Filipina who has been a missionary in Indonesia and East Timor for 35 years, and Sister Maria Letizia, an Italian who has been a missionary in East Timor for 34 years, do not experience intergenerational relationships as a problem, because at their age they do not have delusions of prominence. Their presence is appreciated because they see, welcome and understand, while younger sisters respond with affection. To live well, it is important to be present, to live the essentials of consecrated life, mission and charism; the rest is dropped, otherwise we become heavy. Throughout the Asian continent, there is a great respect for elderly sisters, who are considered wise because they are rich in age. In the Philippines, the sisters, before embarking on their pastoral work, go through the rooms of the older ones to catch the light and joy shining on their faces and to have an additional motivation to set out on their mission.

In the Dominican Republic Sister Angela, from Italy, and Sister Pilar, from Spain, who have been missionaries for 47 and 67 years, confirm that they see good relations between the younger sisters and the older sisters, especially the missionaries, from Colombia, Poland, Italy, Spain, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru and Vietnam. Communion is experienced as if all are from the Dominican Republic. There is no distinction of nationality: what unites is the anxiety of *Da mihi animas coetera tolle* and one lives the mission in communion with joy, enthusiasm, cheerfulness. The missionaries are valued and well-liked by the families and sisters, who greatly appreciate the giving, generous, enthusiastic dedication and availability. Thanks to the diversity of cultures and the effort to integrate into the customs in which they are embedded, pastoral action is enriched with creative novelty.





CUISINE as **INTRODUCTION** to **DIALOGUE** between **CULTURES**

Bosco Food



Traditional cuisine reflects a people's unique history, lifestyle, values, and beliefs. It is passed down from one generation to the next as an expression of cultural identity. Every one of us is born into a culture. Hence, we

grow up eating the cuisine of our cultures. Thus, our local cuisine becomes a part of who each of us are.

As the world becomes more globalized, cuisines from diverse cultures become easily available. This gives a great possibility to all to become more informed about other cultures by trying their cuisine. This should bring us to realize that each dish has a special place in the culture to which it belongs and is special to those who prepare it. Indeed, food is not only for nourishment. It is a door into a culture, and it should be appreciated as such.

These are the premises for the launch of the **Bosco Food** project, which since two years has seen the Missions Sector engaged in proposing every week the recipe of a typical dish from a country where the Salesians are present. Each community is invited to prepare it and to help its members to broaden their



cultural horizons. Besides the ingredients and the preparation of the food, each country presents certain characteristics of the culture, faith or Salesian presence.

All this is part of the preparation that will lead us,

next year, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the first Salesian missionary expedition.

What are you waiting for?

You too can prepare Bosco Food recipes and post them on social networks by tagging the accounts of the Missions Sector with the hashtag #boscofood.

Have fun in the kitchen!

All the recipes can be downloaded here:





SOWERS of DIALOGUE

The Salesian Missionary Volunteers



Juan Pablo Martínez García
Volunteer in Tijuana, Mexico (MEG)

My name is Juan Pablo Martínez García, I am originally from Irapuato, in the Mexican State of Guanajuato, I am currently 24 years old and I am a volunteer in the Salesian community of Tijuana. In the city of Irapuato I attended the Salesian Youth Center (CEJUSA) where I belonged to the Salesian Youth Movement (SYM), in the Don Bosco Youth Community (CJDB). The CJDB group consists of offering formation and accompaniment to young people through the biblical experiential method in order to form a community of faith, love and hope for the evangelization of young people and their apostolic insertion in the church. What I liked most about CJDB was being able to get to know a young Christ through Don Bosco, where I lived and learned a new way of evangelizing, with a lot of joy, love and fraternity. For this reason I am volunteering today.



Tijuana is a city where there is a great variety of culture, customs and religions, due to the high migration, making it a city of passage. The people who live in Tijuana do not have fixed traditions, they mix what they see and live, mainly influenced by the neighboring country, the United States. For these reasons, young people are distanced from the church and even more so because they want to live and work



the American dream, in the hope of having a better quality of life. Tijuana is one of the most dangerous cities in the country, with many shortages for young people due to the lack of places to live safely and close to their friends and family, with an easy supply of drugs and addictive substances, resulting in a high number of people living on the streets, a typical postcard of the place.

The Salesian presence in this city is made up of five oratories, a parish, a canteen, two hostels and two schools, with which we work to respond to the situation of the city itself, especially that of young people in situations of vulnerability.

I am volunteering in the Parish Oratory of Mary Help of Christians where I mainly help and collaborate with the catechesis, the adolescent group and the youth group.

My experience as a volunteer has helped me to open many doors both to the Salesians and to the people in the community, who have received me with great affection and joy and have made me grow as a person and in spirituality. One of the challenges I have had in my volunteering experience has been to be able to adapt to the rhythm of life of the Salesians because it can be exhausting to a certain extent, since it involves getting up very early and going to bed very late, looking for ways to keep the Salesian works active, which have little presence of lay people and young people, despite the fact that Mexico is a country where the majority of the population is Catholic and many of them are not practicing.

Dialogue is a key element in my volunteering experience because it is thanks to dialogue that I am here. The first step was to share the CJDB project with the Province to take the same association to communities

Just 30 metres from the US border, a Salesian house in Mexico offers numerous services to young people, the poor and migrants in the world's busiest land border area.





where they are not present through a volunteer.

The second step was to choose the Salesian community, which in this case was Tijuana because of its proximity to Mexicali, a community that has the association and the same interest as a Salesian from Tijuana who knows the movement.

The third step was to prepare myself for the experience of Salesian Missionary Volunteering, having meetings with my spiritual director, since the experience was not only going to focus on the opening of the CJDB group but on a whole experience of integral growth, from the human to the Christian aspects, as the Salesian, together with the community life.

The fourth step was to integrate myself into the community, to get to know the city, the Salesians, and the people in order to find the best strategies to attract young people to the oratory and, consequently, with whom we could start the CJDB group. Despite the challenges and difficulties that we have already mentioned, we have managed to sow the seed, bearing in mind that this is not over and that we have to continue watering and nurturing it day by day with the help of dialogue, because if it had not been for this small action, we would not have been able to get to this point.

I believe that knowing Christ as a young person is not something to keep to oneself, but to share with others, which is why I decided to get out of my comfort zone to transmit to the young people of Tijuana the Christ that I have come to know thanks to CJDB. It is worth living a Salesian missionary volunteer experience because you grow as a person and it allows you to share your life experiences and your spiritual experience, which is the best way to evangelise other young people like me.

For more information

CJDB Irapuato Oficial – Facebook

CJDB_oficial - Instagram

Voluntariado MEG – Facebook / Instagram



The **DIALOGUE** of **LIFE** and **ACTION** as **INITIAL** **PROCLAMATION**

Salesian Apostolate in Palabek



Sr. Zipporah N. Waitathu

Agriculture and livelihood coordinator

Don Bosco Palabek Refugee Settlement (Uganda)

The *Don Bosco Palabek Refugee Settlement* came into existence in April 2017 to respond to the influx of a large number of refugees arriving from South Sudan, especially the neighboring areas such as Pajok, Torit and other places in eastern and southern provinces of South Sudan. The work has now developed beyond imagination, thanks to numerous benefactors.

The local Salesian community is managing a Vocational Training Centre, four nursery schools within the settlement, an agriculture livelihood program and 16 chapels with pastoral programs



Uganda –
Salesian missionaries in Palabek provide food aid to 800 people



particularly for young people. These chapels are under the care of catechists who lead the community to share the Word of God and gather the community for the Sunday Prayer Service.



Although land is limited, focus is on strengthening backyard farming skills, irrigation and production techniques for fruits and vegetables of youth and women. The main objective is to address food shortages and improve access to nutritious foods for households' self-sufficiency. This programme has helped assured the refugees a regular source of food.

One significant development in Palabek is the Missionary Group among young refugees. During the week group members meet at least twice to pray the Rosary and share the Gospel. After the Sunday Eucharist the members divide into small groups of five or six and make their house visitation. Upon arrival in the house of a family the members help in cleaning the surroundings, chop wood for the family to use, if there is a need, they also help the mother wash the clothes of the family. Once these are all done, they sit with the family to sing some songs, tell stories particularly about their faith in Jesus and about Jesus himself. The family visitation concludes with a short prayer or the recitation of the Rosary, if considered opportune.

Through education, technical formation, livelihood programs, the Educative-Pastoral Community of Don Bosco Palabek fosters the dialogue of life and action with refugees that could stir up an interest in the person of Jesus Christ. This interest, in turn, becomes the foundation to start the journey of catechumenate, catechesis and pastoral ministry.

The **PROPHECY** of **PROVINCIAL** **INTERCULTURALITY** New young missionaries welcomed in Slovenia



Fr. Peter Končan SDB

Vice-Provincial of Slovenia (SLO), Rakovnik

The Slovenian Province has always been open to the missionary spirit. In the 100 years of our history we have had over 100 missionary confreres in all parts of the world. The most famous among them is the servant of God Fr Andrej Majcen, a missionary in China and Vietnam.

In recent years, as in the rest of Europe, we have seen a sharp decline in religious vocations in Slovenia. This was the main reason for joining the Project Europe. We started a process of redesigning and revitalizing our charism. At the basis of the project, we asked the Rector Major to receive missionaries, and we are very happy and grateful for the gift of five missionaries. From Expedition 152 we received Cyprian from Uganda, Joseph and Vincent from Vietnam and from Expedition 153 Oscar from Congo and Daniel from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and from 154th Shivraj from India. All are still in the initial formation, most of them after the post-novitiate.



Servant of
God Fr Andrej
Majcen, SDB.

Receiving the missionaries was a new experience for us, so we wanted to do everything to make the project a success. One of

Fr Alfred Maravilla, General Councillor for the Missions, was on an animation visit to Slovenia. The main objective of the visit was to evaluate the Europe Project in the Salesian Province "SS. Cyril and Methodius



the very important steps was the visit of the General Councillor for the Missions Fr Maravilla. Through dialogue and various meetings we were able to deepen our understanding of the main reasons for the

Project Europe and what this means for the reality of our Province. Fr Maravilla also gave us many practical suggestions to bear in mind when welcoming new missionaries. Right from the start we wanted to make the missionaries feel that we are very happy to welcome them and that we want them to feel at home with us. Although many of the young people understand English, knowledge of the Slovenian language is essential. That is why we enrolled them from the very first days in a language course that lasted the entire first year of their stay with us. They were placed in the Ljubljana Rakovnik community, which has very varied activities, so that the missionaries could have a lot of contact with the young people and the locals. They received them with great sympathy. The missionaries from other parts of the world also immediately made headlines in the media, both Catholic and others. To make themselves known to the brothers from other communities, they made several visits and participated in our meetings and projects at the provincial level.

Arriving in a completely new cultural context is a shock for anyone, even more so for one who intends to stay in the new country for his whole life. The first difficulty for the missionaries was the language, for some it still is. Getting used to the new food, the new customs of the culture, the new people, the cold autumn and weather... After a while you miss your friends, family and country. In this context, many questions arise, also on the vocational level. That is why it is very important to have a brother who is friendly and who helps the missionaries in their daily needs.

On the community side, I think the reception phase was very good. The confreres did their best to help the missionaries in their first steps, if they could not do it with words, they did it with concrete gestures. The first challenge was how to make the missionaries understand the new things and our ways of doing and thinking. Right away we noticed that it was not enough just to explain, but that a lot of patience and accompaniment was needed. We still need to reinforce the idea that it is not only the missionaries who must adapt, but we are also called to change our mentality and certain ways of doing things.

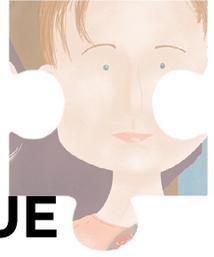
We are aware that the arrival of missionaries is not a miraculous gesture that can solve all the problems of our Province. All of us confreres are called to reflect on what and how to act and live to respond to the challenges of young people and our communities today.

Missionaries can help us to revive the Salesian charism in our context. They can give us an even more open perspective. For this divided and self-enclosed world, we can be a prophetic sign of how we can live and work together in diversity. The important thing is that during the time of their initial formation we all go through the process together, both the brothers already belonging to our province and the new missionaries who have arrived, in order to take full advantage of the opportunity given. I am convinced that the new missionaries are a gift sent to us by God to meet the challenges of this time. We, with our decisions and our actions, must do everything to ensure that this project bears good fruit.



Meeting of young Salesians in initial formation and missionaries

For more information www.donbosko.si



A PRESENCE that **BECOMES DIALOGUE**

The Salesian mission in Cambodia



Fr. Michael Gaikwad SDB

Poipet, Salesian Delegation of Cambodia

Cambodia has a varied religious plurality. Many religions peacefully co-exist in this country: Buddhism (state religion), Christianity, Islam and other groups. Catholic Church and Salesians have encouraged and fostered inter-religious dialogue through various initiatives. There have been regular meetings and events organized in Phnom Penh and Battambang (which are two big cities in Cambodia) for the same. These events have not been sporadic but have been well planned. Inculturation has been a tool that has been harnessed by the Cambodian Catholic Church to engage in inter-religious dialogue.

When one visits any Catholic Church in Cambodia one is amazed

Cambodia: the new church in Po Thon



and fascinated by the structure. It is not a westernized building but a building that is similar to a Cambodian place of worship. This creates an atmosphere of welcome to all. In some churches of Battambang we can see images of Jesus pushing a wheel that has eight spokes. The spokes symbolize the eight-fold path of Buddhism and the eight beatitudes. Also, one can see images of Jesus washing the feet of a handicapped person who has lost a leg. This is very figurative and rich

with meaning as Cambodia has the highest rate of amputees in the world who are victims of landmines.

It is common knowledge that we celebrate All Souls Day on 2nd November. However, in many churches in Cambodia All Souls Day celebrations are celebrated on the same day and during the same week when the Buddhists celebrate the feast of Pchum Ben – a day when they recall their ancestors and pay respect to the dead. Events like this bring the Christians in closer communion with Buddhists.

The Apostolic Vicar of Phnom Penh, Bishop Olivier Schmitthaeusler and Monsignor Enrique Figaredo Alvargonzález of the Apostolic Vicariate of Battambang constantly involve and invite Buddhist monks for inter-religious dialogue. They have not sacrificed proclamation of

the gospel for the sake of inter-religious dialogue. In all their encounters with Buddhism, the focus is not any theological discourse and sharing of the faith. It is a moment to exhibit brotherhood.

The Salesians of Don Bosco have five Salesian institutions in Cambodia (Phnom Penh-300 students, Sihanoukville-250students, Battambang - 900 students, Kep-500 students and Poipet-600 students), with a total number of 20 catholic students last year. Every activity in our institutions is a moment of inter-religious dialogue. The principle is to dialogue through education. We focus on the holistic development of the students. The Salesians always keep in mind to bear witness to the Triune God by our educative system. The students address all the Salesian priests as fathers and brothers and the Salesian sisters are addressed as sisters. As per the Cambodian culture only a true, genuine and affectionate relationship will allow this to happen.





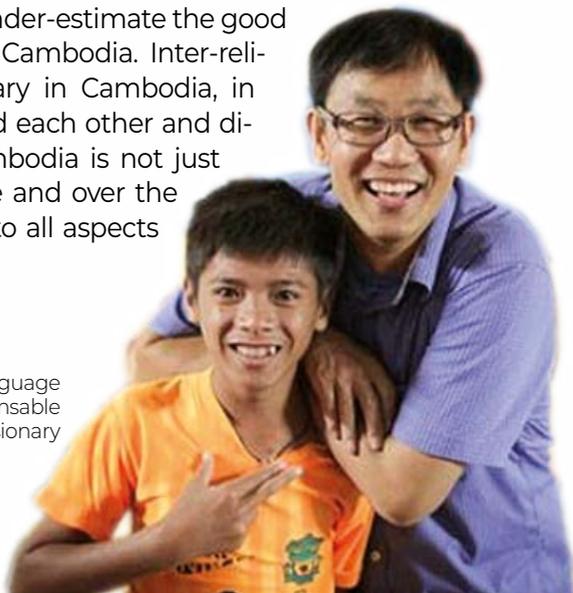
The three-day celebration of the Khmer New Year is also another unique moment. It always coincides with Lent and the celebration of Easter. There are two sets of activities; during the day we celebrate the Khmer New year and, in the evening, we have the celebration of the Paschal triduum and many Buddhist students willingly participate in the services. The New year celebration is also a time of thanks-

giving, every student pays respects to the Salesian educative pastoral community by washing their hands and feet. It is a time of reconciliation and thankfulness. Symbolically, the educative pastoral community will wash the statute of Don Bosco. In the evening we have the celebration of the Paschal triduum and the Salesians too take time to explain to the students various parts of the Paschal triduum celebration.

One aspect that the Salesians have to keep in mind in to make sure that Don Bosco is not portrayed as a God. The Cambodian culture is capable of thinking of Don Bosco as some purely heavenly person.

In conclusion, the inter-religious dialogue by the Cambodian Catholic Church and Salesians in Cambodia is a journey. A journey that does not compromise on proclamation of the Gospel and at the same time does not under-estimate the good in every other religion in Cambodia. Inter-religious dialogue is necessary in Cambodia, in order to better understand each other and dialogue. Buddhism in Cambodia is not just a religion but a way of life and over the years it has permeated into all aspects of their culture.

Cambodia: knowledge of the language of the population is indispensable for a missionary



GOMA: A Loving Dialogue that keeps hope alive



Fr. Jean Pierre Mahima Mutaka SDB
Rector, Goma – Ngangi (Dem. Rep. of Congo)

How do we keep hope and dialogue alive in these hard trials?

- A wave of internal solidarity gave us the hope and inner strength to face COVID-19. We used a very simple technique: everyone had to do something. The older ones took care of the younger ones, the healthy ones took care of the sick ones despite the risk of contamination, and the sick ones prayed for the healthy ones. The dialogue served to dispel all the prejudices of the people, for many it was just an imaginary disease created by the Europeans. The Salesians held a series of discussions with all the young people and their educators, showing them that, contrary to rumors, COVID-19 is real and devastates lives.
- It was not easy to manage the evacuation from the volcanic zone, given the time and resources available, but we managed to do so with the help of Belgian volunteers and friends from the association 'En Avant les Enfants (EALE)'. During this natural disaster, we had a great experience of the power of dialogue to move the children and young people from our Salesian home to a place where we would be safe and establish a good coexistence with the local population.

Goma, Dem. Rep. of Congo

- ▶ March 2020
Covid, total containment
- ▶ 22 February 2021
Nyiragongo volcano eruption
- ▶ 8 November 2022 - Arrival of displaced persons fleeing the war



- The Salesians are working to help the displaced people as best they can until peace is restored in their homelands. The gruesome episode of this war demonstrated the effectiveness of dialogue and its ability to end any dispute. The 26,000 IDPs had settled in the playgrounds of the Salesian Home in Ngangi, where young people from all walks of life played various sports. By promoting the dialogue of charity, the Salesians are trying to keep hope alive among the IDPs in Goma.

GUAYUSA: The **daily Achuar ritual of harmony and “buen vivir”**



Fr. Diego Clavijo SDB

Amazonian mission of Wasakentsa (Ecuador)

Achuar families drink an infusion of tea with the guayusa leaf at around 3:00 in the early morning, usually as a family and occasionally as a community.

The wife is the first to get up to set up the kitchen and the necessary seats for the beginning of this rite.

The participants get up slowly, sleepy, unwilling, uninterested or uncaring to do some things, even unmotivated and unenthusiastic. The head of the family begins the ritual by offering each one the un-guship (an Achuar cup plucked from the fruit of a tree), offering a little water to wash away the bitterness in the mouth and remove the heaviness from the face.

The ritual begins in silence, exchanging slow, crestfallen movements as they absorb short mouthfuls of the guayusa infusion. As time goes by, the drinker blows on the hot tea while bringing to mind the memory of everyday events in the family, community or social life.

In special cases, conflicts and situations of serious tensions in the family or in the community are dealt with.

Speeches and arguments are soon sparked off with no time limit, each person makes their thoughts known and what seems appropriate to them. The whole dialogue takes place between one sip of the guayusa infusion that has energized their body and even more their thinking, which helps them to face opposing discourses. After a long period of drinking guayusa, about two or three liters, the dawn begins to break. In this way, the guayusa ends the sleepiness and drowsiness of the early morning, leading its allies to conclusions, agreements and compromises on the problem or issue of tension that had been raised.

After the resolutions, at the beginning of dawn they move from the guayusa to drinking the manioc-yucca drink (Chicha/masato). Here the previous speeches are left behind and a fraternal, familiar conversation takes place, full of jokes about each other.

As the sun fully rises, the participants slowly and respectfully leave their seats, commenting on where they are going to work that day, but not without carrying in their hearts the taste of the harmony and balance that has returned to family and community life. Peace is once again a force capable of generating physical and spiritual health, as well as enthusiasm and unity to carry forward the work for the good life of the present and future generations.

This narrative is an important lesson for all: it is necessary to understand the cultural practices and the rhythm of life of the original peoples in order to understand their cosmo-vision and to take the first steps to establish a dialogue with them.

Achuar, originating from the Amazon, "people of the Wayus".

The guayusa is an ancestral plant that grows in the jungles of the Amazon and has stimulating, energetic, medicinal and ritual, energizing and antioxidant benefits for the body with tea infusions.

The "uyun" is an earthenware pot that emanates its boiling and forcefully releases steam from the water of the guayusa tea.



DIALOGUE OF SOLIDARITY: **God's smile** **in conflict zone** A story from Ukraine



Maria Babiy

Project Manager, Salesian PDO of Lviv (Ukraine)

“It will be a very long day,” - I thought as I woke up at home. I can't imagine what it's like to live in a plastic box.

In the morning, I was gluing stickers with the logos on paper bags in the office. Paper bags and this sounds good. Hours of monotonous work made me want to sleep. Then, my colleagues and I were loading clothes and shoes into the minibus for quite a long. At that time, our dutiful printer printed lists of people living in a modular town for IDPs, which the Salesians of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church cared for. Air raid alarm. The printer finally quiets down.

We are going to “Mariapolis” or “the town of Mary.”

Wartime architecture: a hundred of white houses-boxes.

Wartime music: the hum of a generator.

Wartime aesthetics: the endless line for lunch.

In the field kitchen brought from Italy, we also have some sandwiches.

Our team, three of us, plans its work. We have a ton of clothes and shoes to distribute. New. Selected by size and age. Individually. It helps me feel dignified.

– FOCUS –

In the container canteen, the smell of food is unbearable. Children are playing. I am perplexed. Our logistician Andriy divides a part of the canteen into zones: a clothes warehouse, a recording table, and a place for queuing. I'm getting used to it.

With my colleagues, I start sorting everything we have brought according to the houses' numbers: from 1 to 30.

The residents of "Mariapolis" seem interested. For them, it is already common to see humanitarian missions, but it is still interesting. The distribution begins.

A jacket, shoes, thermal underwear, a warm suit. All over again. People are different. From Kherson, Mykolaiv, Kramatorsk...

Different questions, different needs, different requests. Not everyone is satisfied, but many of them are.

The houses from 31 to 60:

A lady approaches and gives us chocolates on a stick. I am pleased.

Another lady approaches and complains that she needs to be added to the list. I feel sorry for that.

A gentleman approaches: "Are there any hats?" It's frosty; he's wearing a sports cap. I feel for him.

We promise to come back again with hats.

The houses from 61 to 94.

A lady with cerebral palsy painstakingly puts her signature on a form. Then, she tries on her new jacket. After that, she smiles at us from the bottom of her heart. For me, it seems that God has just smiled at me.

With our small efforts to concretely express Christian solidarity in conflict zones we are bringing the smile of God specially in these zones.





EPC: SALESIAN WAY of BEING a SYNODAL CHURCH



Fr. Rafael Bejarano SDB
Salesian Youth Ministry Sector



Pope Francis insisted on “synodality” and today the universal Church is committed to recovering this term in order to remain faithful to the communion and unity to which the Spirit of God calls us. The Church was shaped by the apostles in the sense of synodality: from the earliest years, the early Christians pooled their possessions, their ability to reflect and make decisions that would ensure, in an act of discernment, the spread of the Gospel message according to Christ’s plan. In this spiritual methodology, the Father’s Will is revealed to the Church in every time and place through prayer, listening to the Word and reading human reality in order to communicate to peoples the wonders of His love.

The Salesian Congregation, being an active part of the Church, assumes synodality and configures all its works through the Educative and Pastoral Communities (EPC) according to this identity of communion. Thus, the EPC is the concrete way of being Church for all our presences, whatever the pastoral sector in which they carry out their mission. Embedded in a diocese and a territory, the EPCs contribute to building the Kingdom of God among the people and culture of the place.

The synodal identity of the EPC is based on community discernment, which is why the shared responsibility of all its members



ensures that missionary processes and activities are planned organically. This concept necessarily leads to paying attention to the profiles of the people, both religious and lay, who guide the work and make the decisions that ensure its relevance.



Inclusion, communication, participation, work teams and appropriate tools, together with spaces for reflection, programming and joint evaluation, help the EPC to strengthen its ecclesial identity, avoiding personalism, self-referentiality, improvisation and disjointed processes. Taking care of human resources must be a priority in the EPC, so that everyone acquires the necessary skills to achieve the common goal of forming good and honest citizens.

In this way, the EPC, as a concrete expression of being Church, participates in the process of evangelization as a contribution of the Salesian charism for the good of humanity.

- How does the EPC to which you belong put these things into practice?
- How does dialogue take place in your EPC?
- What steps do you suggest for greater communion?



WHEN DIALOGUE BECOMES SOLIDARITY

A playground for the oratory in Lushnjë

Salesians of Don Bosco have been working in Albania over thirty years now, starting from the cities of Tirana and Scutari. From 1992 when the first Salesian began the work with a small barrack amid lots of obstacles, to the present day with the existence of the parish churches, the professional school, elementary school, high school, a day care center for the street children, and of course not forgetting the flourishing oratories. The Salesians have seen these changes as a big miracle that has taken place during these years and still continues to believe in the improvement of this place.

Since September 2020, the parish church of 'Saint Peter and Saint Paul' at Lushnjë has been entrusted to the Salesian Society, by the Bishop of south Albania. Lushnjë is a city in west-central Albania, dominated mainly by Muslims and Orthodox community, with about 55,000 inhabitants and is known for its agricultural production. The parish church has also three sub-centers in the villages, Bubullime (25 km away), Gungas (20km) and Plug (5 km) where we cater to the spiritual needs. There is an international community with three

Salesian present (from Vietnam, India and Albania) in Lushnjë. Our center has been an open environment for all people regardless of religion, race, nationality and gender. Our main focus is on the education and formation of children and youth. It is notable to see that many young families and their children are frequenting our



church ambient on daily bases, as they feel a secure and educative environment.



Salesians are at the initial stage of their mission at Lushnjë and the vast church courtyard structure offers varied possibilities for the systemization. The specific objective of this project is to offer an adequate place for the children and youth, at the same time it will allow us to enter into mutual bounding and dialogue. Especially, the outdoor kinder-garden project is very important for us in order to invite young families and to give space for the little ones. This will allow us offer secure place for the children, at the same time it will be a time for us to be in mutual bounding and dialogue with the territory. Through this project of reconstruction of playground will enhance parish-oratory center to once more ensure that this is a home that welcomes everyone, especially children and youth, a school to learn for life, a Church to offer spiritual life and above all the playgrounds so they can encounter and meet each other. This project will allow greater possibility for young people to participate in the activities on a daily basis, especially during the rainy season.

Construction of the playground for the children	32.000 €
Construction of Oratory office and reorganization of the area for daily Oratory purposes (classrooms, games room, theater and toilets)	25.000 €
Total	57.000 €

BANK

Nome	Tirana Bank
Address	Lagjja Skender Libohova, Sheshi Bashkia, 9001 Lushnje
Bank account name	FAM.SH.APOSTUJ PJETRI E PALI K.KATOLIKE
IBAN	AL66 2062 2011 0001 0003 0949 4101
Swift Code	TIRBALTR
Account number	1000-309494-101

2024 SMD PRAYER

Most Holy Trinity, we love, praise and adore you.

You are a communion of three persons –
always in loving dialogue with one another.

Help us to image you in our lives.

Father and creator of all,
Help us to be builders of dialogue wherever we are:
In our families, schools, workplaces, playgrounds,
Between religions, races, cultures, the rich and the poor.

Jesus the Word,
make our words life-giving.
May our lives and actions build bridges between people
and break down the walls that divide and destroy.

Holy Spirit, fire of love,
purify our hearts.
Make our hearts reach out in dialogue to your heart,
the hearts of others and the heart of all creation.

So be it.

Amen.



📱 GMS 2024