



2017

INITIAL PROCLAMATION AND
THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
OF AMERICA

*...and they
remained
with us*

SALESIAN

MISSION

DAY



SALESIAN MISSIONS SECTOR

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...and they remained with us

The perfect model of a missionary is Jesus Christ. Through the incarnation he assumed a human nature, became inserted into a culture, learned a language, and lived the values of his people. *He pitched his tent in our midst.* (Jn 1,14). He did not merely pass by, but rather he loved us to the end. (cf. Jn 13,1). His entire existence is in itself missionary: from the incarnation until his own definitive embracing of the cross.

A missionary vocation follows the Lord's model. Particularly this year, we want to underline the presence of the Salesians of Don Bosco in the midst of the indigenous peoples of America. A presence that has sought to know, value and at times to save their culture and identity. Certainly a generous missionary action, in its initial moments, is not exempt from the very limitations of the time, that becomes enriched by the anthropological sciences and the theology of Vatican II. A presence among the Mapuche, Figueños, Guaraní, Bororós, Xavantes, Shuars, Yanomamis, Mixes, Chiantecos, Aymara Quechuas, Qeqchis, and many others. With them we share and proclaim the Good News of Jesus, and its consequent realization of full humanization, through education, technical formation, the development of agriculture, and reflection at the university level on the indigenous identity. From the Salesian mission comes forth fruits of culture and holiness, as we have seen in the testimony of Blessed Zeferino Namuncurá.

The missionary presence is not merely a tourist or cultural trip, rather, it is like that of the Lord, who came "to stay with them". It is remaining there to give one's own life, like those of hundreds of missionaries who have given their very lives to serve their indigenous brothers and sisters, and in some instances, ratifying that commitment by their own martyrdom.

May this Mission Day help the Salesian Family make Christ more present in indigenous cultures and the richness of these indigenous peoples of America fully present in the universal Church.

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EXPLANATION OF THE SALESIAN MISSION DAY 2017 POSTER

The Yanomami youth in the foreground transmits clearly the theme of the Salesian Mission Day 2017: Initial proclamation and the Indigenous Peoples of America. Don Bosco sent the Salesians to Patagonia; since then the Salesians have remained with so many more indigenous peoples continuing to foster initial proclamation, the birth and the development of the local Church. The photo in the background shows a procession of indigenous people presided over by their bishop as seen through the eyes of Don Bosco. The presence of an indigenous family in the poster connects the Salesian Mission Day with the strena of the Rector Major: "We are Family! Each home a school of Life and Love".

Salesian Mission Day 2017 is not only an occasion to remember and recount once again a glorious history. It is an invitation which urges Salesians to realize that they still have a yet greater history to bring about with the indigenous peoples and the entire Salesian Family of America.

LETTER of the Rector Major

November 11, 2016

† It fills me with joy and gratitude to know that this year our missionary gaze is directed to America, beloved and dreamed of by our Father Don Bosco. You all well know that America is the land to which I had the grace to have been called to serve and animate for some years.

When, at the conclusion of the Bicentenary year of the birth of Don Bosco I said to my Salesian confreres that I dreamed of a Salesian Congregation ever more missionary, I wished to say also that we must return to our missionary roots. This Salesian Mission Day gives us this precious opportunity.

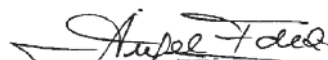
It is my desire that the theme chosen for the Salesian Mission Day of this year go together hand in hand and with the same pace as the Strenna. That is to say, that we realize, in first place, just as the first missionaries arriving in America knew, how to create a family spirit and atmosphere of a home in each one of the peoples and cultures with which they came into contact with. They dearly loved all the indigenous groups to whom they were sent. They respected them and made their own all of their joys, their frustrations and their dreams. They defended them to the point of giving their lives for them.

Their example continues to be a missionary challenge of the first rank for us, a call of Don Bosco to continue to be very present in each one of the farthest peripheries where the poorest and most abandoned young people await us.

I desire and I hope that these Salesian Mission Day may:

- Promote and consolidate, in our Salesian presences in America and all over the world, the defense and promotion of the **ethnic minorities**. We cannot allow the motivation of this desire escape us. Among these ethnic minorities are our beloved young. Our presence in their midst and with them cannot be simply generic, but rather must carry with it the richness of our charism to the young and the common people.
- Strengthen our capacity to be prophets of fraternity and builders of a humanity both reconciled and in peace, in particular in the most multi-cultural and pluri-religious contexts in which we find ourselves. It is precisely there where our youth are most tempted by violence and division.
- Become even more passionate, and by contagion, impassion all the Salesian Family with zeal for the evangelization of the young and of all peoples, through the initial proclamation of Jesus. Our family was born missionary, and cannot cease to be so! ■




Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime, SDB
Rector Major

LETTER of the Councilor for the Missions

Through this Salesian Mission Day of 2017, we turn our gaze and our missionary attention towards America. Just as if we were once boarding the boat on November 11, 1875, which carried our very first missionaries to South America.

Already in the previous years, America was the theme of the Salesian Mission Day. But this time in particular, we discover an excellent opportunity to:

- Recreate a historical missionary memory, full of gratitude. Each one of our Salesian Provinces in the world have a most beautiful missionary history in their initial beginnings, in their pioneers. Even the most recently founded ones share this in common, as in the case of the presences which have been the fruit of Project Africa. It is, therefore, urgent that our younger generation of Salesians study in depth and with attention the figures of the missionary pioneers of their very own Provinces, as well as the diversity of methodologies of evangelization which were assumed in the varied contexts.
- Promote the missionary volunteer service among the young, in particular that which is directed to the indigenous communities of the American continent. This should bring about interest in lay youth missionaries of our settings, not only at the level of the two American Regions (South Cone and Interamerica) but also in other Regions and continents. Through this Salesian Mission Day we propose to motivate and activate a youth missionary volunteer service which is even richer and more articulate, both within the Provinces and from country to country as well.
- To pray for *missionary vocations ad gentes*. Many of these indigenous populations would not have been saved, would not exist today if it had not specifically been for young Salesians willing to give their lives to their last breath, like Don Bosco, for the mission. This is what we are grateful from the Holy Spirit: the vocation of every missionary *ad gentes*, *ad exteros*, *ad vitam*. And this is what we want to ask individually and each of our communities this year to send more laborers into His harvest. ■

J. Basaños
Fr. Guillermo Basaños, SDB
Councillor for the Missions



Where there was Sin, Grace abounded



bishops who strongly opposed the logic of the sword with the power of the Cross. There was sin, a great deal of it, for which we did not ask pardon. So for this, we ask forgiveness, I ask forgiveness. But here also, where there was sin, great sin, grace abounded through the men and women who defended the rights of indigenous peoples.

I also ask everyone, believers and nonbelievers alike, to think of those many bishops, priests and

Let us say “NO”, then, to forms of colonialism old and new. Let us say “YES” to the encounter between peoples and cultures. Blessed are the peacemakers.

Here I wish to bring up an important issue. Some may rightly say, “When the Pope speaks of colonialism, he overlooks certain actions of the Church”. I say this to you with regret: many grave sins were committed against the native peoples of America in the name of God. My predecessors acknowledged this, the Council of Latin American Bishops (CELAM), has said it, and I too wish to say it. ... I would also say, and here I wish to be quite clear, as was Saint John Paul II: **I humbly ask forgiveness, not only for the offenses of the Church herself, but also for crimes committed against the native peoples during the so-called conquest of America.** Together with this request for forgiveness and in order to be just, **I also would like us to remember the thousands of priests and**

laity who preached and continue to preach the Good News of Jesus with courage and meekness, respectfully and pacifically – though I said bishops, priests and laity, I do not wish to forget the religious sisters who have been so present to our poor neighborhoods, bringing a message of peace and well-being – ; who left behind them impressive works of human promotion and of love, often standing alongside the native peoples or accompanying their popular movements even to the point of martyrdom. The Church, her sons and daughters, are part of the identity of the peoples of Latin America. [...]

To our brothers and sisters in the Latin American indigenous movement, allow me to express my deep affection and appreciation of their efforts to bring peoples and cultures together – a coming together of peoples and cultures – in a form of coexistence which I like to call polyhedric, where each group preserves its own identity by building



together a plurality which does not threaten but rather reinforces unity. Your quest for an interculturalism, which combines the defense of the rights of the native peoples with respect for the territorial integrity of states,

is for all of us a source of enrichment and encouragement. ■

Pope Francis

Address to Popular Movements,
Santa Cruz de la Sierra (Bolivia)
July 9, 2015

A Special Attention to Indigenous Peoples

If the Church in America, in fidelity to the Gospel of Christ, intends to walk the path of solidarity, she must devote special attention to those ethnic groups which even today experience discrimination. Every attempt to marginalize the indigenous peoples must be eliminated. This means, first of all, respecting their territories and the pacts made with them; likewise, efforts must be made to satisfy their legitimate social, health and cultural requirements. And how can we overlook the need for reconciliation between the indigenous peoples and the societies in which they are living?

... Since all people, whatever their race or condition, have been created by God in his image, it is necessary to encourage concrete programs, in which common prayer must play a part, aimed at promoting understanding and reconciliation between different peoples. These can build bridges of Christian love, peace and justice between all men and women.

In order to attain these goals it is essential to train competent pastoral workers capable of employing methods already legitimately "inculturated" in catechesis and the liturgy, avoiding a syncretism which gives only a partial account of true Christian doctrine. Then too, it will be easier to provide a sufficient number of pastors to work with the native peoples if efforts are made to promote priestly and religious vocations within the midst of these very people.

St. John Paul II

Ecclesia in America, n.64

Salesian Mission Day

A continuing tradition

What does it Mean?

The Catholic Church has been celebrating the World Mission Sunday since 1926. From the part of the Salesian Congregation a theme for the Salesian Mission Day has been proposed since 1988. All Salesian communities have an opportunity to get to know a specific mission situation. It is a powerful moment for Salesian Mission Animation in the Province and the local communities, youth groups and for the Salesian Family. It is an opportunity to involve the SDB communities and the Educative - Pastoral Communities (EPC) in the dynamics of the Universal Church, in order to **strengthen the missionary culture**.

Why?

It is to give **an impulse to mission animation** by offering a proposal which becomes a practical program for the year. Again, it is to help the entire Salesian Family to get to know the missionary involvement of the Congregation, and to open the eyes to new missionary circumstances, overcoming every temptation to closure within one's area or context and to be reminded of the universal outreach of the Salesian charism. "Activities aimed at promoting interest in the missions must always be geared to these specific goals, namely, informing and forming the People of God to share in the Church's universal mission, promoting vocations *ad gentes* and encouraging cooperation in the work of evangelization" (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 83).

When?

There is no fixed date for SMD at the world level. **Each Province chooses a date or time** which is best suited to its own rhythm and calendar. Certain traditional dates in Provinces (close to Don Bosco's feast day in January or his birthday in August, Lent, Feast

of the holy Missionary Martyrs – Louis Versiglia and Callistus Caravario – 25 February; May; October (Month of the missions) or 11 November). It is especially important to offer an educative – pastoral set of strategies running over a few weeks – where Salesian Mission Day can be the culmination. SMD expresses the missionary spirit of the entire Educative - Pastoral Community kept alive throughout the year by various initiatives.

How should it be Animated?

Beginning with a **meeting of Rectors**, where the Province Delegate for Missionary Animation (PDMA) explains the aims and distributes the available materials for SMD in the Province (province web page or a link to www.sdb.org – SMD). In this manner **all SDB communities** become the first beneficiaries of SMD dynamics. We can focus our attention each year on any one concrete aspect of missionary culture, praying for missionaries who are back in the Province for SMD and providing concrete support towards the various activities in the missions.

Who Celebrates it?

The first beneficiaries are the **SDB communities**. Then, depending on the Province, there are various ways of organizing programmes depending on the types of the Salesian mission which are present in the Province (schools, vocational training centres, parishes, youth groups, missionary groups especially if they have a missionary or volunteer orientation) and groups of the Salesian Family (Salesian Cooperators, Past Pupils, ADMA), any groups open to the Salesian movement in its entirety and friends of Don Bosco.

What do We Use?

All Salesian communities receive a **poster**, a printed **booklet** in various languages and

prayer cards. You may ask for more printed material from the Missions Sector, Rome (cagliero11@gmail.com). The video is produced by Missioni Don Bosco, Turin which is available on-line (<http://www.missionidonbosco.tv>).

The Importance of Praying for the Missions

All members of the EPC contribute to the missionary activities of the Congregation and the Church through **prayer accompanied by sacrifices** made for **Salesian missionaries and missionary vocations**. The eleventh day of every month (Commemoration of the first Salesian Missionary Expedition) is an opportunity to pray for the Salesian Mission Intention. Missionary activities flow out of and are supported by an encounter with God. Therefore each year there is a special prayer prepared for the SMD.

SMD Project

Every year a project is proposed for the whole Congregation. This is an important part of the

SMD dynamics. The primary purpose of the SMD project is *not just to raise funds*. Rather it is meant to be **an educative experience to practical solidarity** for young people. The PDMA fosters solidarity through various initiatives particularly during the privileged liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent or during the month of October or as part of the celebration of the SMD. The whole Province community is also invited to make monetary contribution as a concrete expression of missionary solidarity.

Evaluation

After the Salesian Mission Day celebration, **an evaluation is as important as the preparation** for the celebration.

It is important to examine whether the SMD has been able to promote a missionary culture in the local or Province community, according to the proposed theme for the year. The community should propose corrective measures to live the missionary culture daily in the local or Province community. ■

SMD A continuing tradition (1988 – 2017)

Year	Theme
1988	Guinea – Conakry: The dream continues
1989	Zambia: Lufubu Project
1990	East-Timor – Venilale: Young evangelisers
1991	Paraguay: Street kids
1992	Peru-Valle Sagrado Incas: Christ lives on Inca paths
1993	Togo-Kara: Don Bosco and Africa – A dream becomes true
1994	Cambodia-Phnom Penh: Missionaries as peace-builders
1995	India – Gujarat: In dialogue to share the faith
1996	Russia – Yakutsk: Lights of hope in Siberia
1997	Madagascar: “I say to you, child, get up”
1998	Brazil: Yanomami: New life in Christ
1999	Japan: The Challenging Proclamation of Christ in Japan
2000	Angola: The Gospel as the seed of reconciliation
2001	Papua New Guinea: Walking with the young
2002	Missionaries among the young refugees
2003	Involvement for human development in the missions

2004	India – Arunachal Pradesh: A People awakened
2005	Mongolia: A new mission frontier
2006	Sudan: The Salesian mission in Sudan
2007	Sudan: The Salesian mission in Sudan
2008	HIV/AIDS: The Salesian response – education for life
2009	Mission animation – Keep the missionary flame alive
2010	Europe: The Salesians of Don Bosco walk with the Gypsies
2011	America: Volunteers for proclaiming the Gospel
2012	Asia: Telling the story of Jesus
2013	Africa: Journey of faith
2014	Europe: We are the others – Salesian focus on migrants
2015	“Lord, send me...” – Salesian missionary vocation
2016	Come help us! Initial Proclamation and new frontiers in Oceania
2017	... And they remained with us: Initial Proclamation and the indigenous peoples of America



The General Theme of SMD for 2015-2020: Initial Proclamation

The overarching theme of the Salesian Mission Day for 2016-2020 is **Initial Proclamation**. The term refers to the witness of life of every Christian and of the whole Christian community, any activity or set of activities, or a brief and joyous proclamation of Jesus meant to stir up an interest in His person, while safeguarding the freedom of conscience, which ultimately lead to an initial adhesion to Him or the revitalisation of faith in Him. It is effectively fostered if it follows a gradual pedagogy which is attentive to the cultural and socio-historical context of the interlocutor. With this understanding of Initial Proclamation it matters less whether one is in a school, university, parish, vocational training centre, oratory, in the forest, in the city, in his country, out of his homeland, whether one is involved in first evangelisation, in education apostolate,



in pastoral activity or in human promotion and development. What matters most is to live one's life as Christian and as religious "permanently in state of mission", in this way, each person and every community is a radiating centre of Christian life.

Initial Proclamation, by its very nature, is directed primarily

- 1) not only to those who do not know Jesus Christ (those who are not Christians) but also to
- 2) Christians who have received poorly the Initial Proclamation of the Gospel hence,
 - a) after having known Jesus Christ, they eventually abandoned him;
 - b) they live their faith as something cultural without worshiping with the community nor receiving the sacraments nor getting involved in the life and activity of the Parish;
 - c) they believe that they have already known him enough, live their faith



in a routine manner or as something cultural;

d) they have weak and vulnerable Christian identity

e) or they no longer practice their faith.

Initial Proclamation is similarly directed

3) to those who search for Someone or something whom they sense but cannot name;

4) and to those who go through daily life deprived of any sense.

In contexts where Christians had a poor Initial Proclamation, the Initial Proclamation that one receives in the family through one's parents is often not adequate to become the foundation of a robust faith. Without this initial conversion and initial personal faith, one's faith risks remaining weak. In this light Initial Proclamation is considered as the first and necessary step towards a new evangelisation.

This initial proclamation to Christians who have received it poorly could be termed as **Second Initial Proclamation** or simply "second proclamation". This second initial proclamation aims at stirring up interest which awakens the dormant initial fascination of the person of Jesus Christ in lukewarm or lax Christians who live their faith in a routine manner or as something merely cultural. Often the Gospel has ceased to fascinate them because they take it for granted as something already known and obvious. In some cases their image of the Church, Catholicism or Christianity is blurred by prejudices, negative experiences, and fears. Hence, the process is reversed in second proclamation. The starting point is the person's experience of faith.

It becomes a second free invitation to discover anew the person of Jesus Christ and his Gospel. This second proclamation also challenges every Christian and of the whole Christian community to a second listening to the Word of God in order to foster an encounter with Christ, the living word of God and reflect him to others. Obviously, then, second proclamation has profound consequences in catechesis.

The rediscovery of the importance and urgency of initial proclamation in all our pastoral activities is the key for a better enlightenment of the strategies to accompany young people in personally knowing and encountering Christ, in promoting our missionary presence in the digital world and among migrants and refugees, in rediscovering the Preventive System as a proposal of evangelisation, and in underlining the inseparable bond between education and evangelisation. ■

(Study Days on Initial Proclamation in the City, Rome, 2015)



The Indigenous Pe

The Indigenous Peoples of North America

There are many different ethnic and cultural groups that made up the original inhabitants of what is now Canada and the United States. The Inuit and Métis are distinct to Canada while other groups such as the Huron, Algonquin, and Iroquois lived in what is now between Canada and the U.S. They were mostly nomadic, living in small bands and subsisting on hunting and gathering. Although the first contact with the Europeans was disastrous, relations varied between the settlers and the native Americans. The French befriended several groups and entered into a mutually beneficial trading relationship with them. The Iroquois, however, became dedicated opponents of the French and warfare between the two was unrelenting,

The native Americans of what is now the United States were a large group of differing nomadic tribes. The more numerous were the Navajo, Cherokee, Sioux, Chippewa and Apache. Their technology was not as advanced as some of the civilizations in South America. As European colonists started to expand their territory into native American areas, violence erupted. After the establishment of the United States of America, the indigenous peoples found themselves at the mercy of a government and people that now saw the American lands as their own. Native American tribes were continuously pushed farther and farther inland. In the mid and late 19th century, the policy of relocating the native Americans in reservations resulted directly and indirectly in the deaths of tens of thousands.



The Indigenous Peoples in Latin America

Actually in Latin America there are 522 indigenous peoples ranging from Patagonia and Easter Island to Oasis America, that is, pre-Columbian southwestern North America, extending from modern-day Utah down to southern Chihuahua in the north of Mexico, passing through different geographical areas such as Chaco Ampliado, Amazon, Orinoco, Andes, Coastal Plain Pacific, continental Caribbean, Lower Central America, and Mesoamerica.

oples of America

By countries, Brazil is one which has more diverse groups of indigenous peoples with 241, that represent a population of 743, 127 persons. Columbia has 83 groups (1,392,623 inhabitants) is the second country with the greatest quantity of peoples, followed by Mexico with 67 (9,504,184 persons) and Peru which has 43 distinct indigenous peoples which comprise 3,919,214 inhabitants from the total Peruvian population.

The other extreme is found in El Salvador, that has 3 groups of indigenous peoples (13,310), Belize with 4 (36,562 inhabitants) and Surinam with 5 (6,601 persons). In the case of the insular Caribbean, such as Antigua and Barbuda, Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica and St. Lucia, there is little data on the survival of native peoples but there are claims of indigenous identity in the local area.

On the other hand, Bolivia, Guatemala and Belize stand out as the countries where indigenous represent higher percentages of the total population, 66.2% with 39.9% and 16.6% respectively. Instead, countries like El Salvador, Brazil, Argentina, Costa Rica, Paraguay and Venezuela record a low percentage of indigenous population (between 0.2% and 2.3%). However, in most Latin American countries the indigenous population ranges from 3% to 10% of all citizens.

Mexico, Bolivia, Guatemala, Peru and Colombia comprise 87% of indigenous people in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a population that is between a maximum of

9,500,000 (Mexico) and a minimum of 1.300.00 inhabitants (Colombia). The remaining 13% of indigenous people live in 20 different states.

5 groups stand out with several million people like Quechua, Nahunta, Aymara, Maya Yucatan and Ki'che', and 6 groups, the Mapuches, Maya Q'eqchi, Cakchiquel, Mam, Mixtec, and Otomi, with populations between half and one million inhabitants.

According to official censuses taken between 2000 and 2008, the total indigenous population identified in Latin American is 28,858,580, while 479,824,248 persons inhabit Latin America. This represents a percentage of identified indigenous population of 6.01%. ■





Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Evangelization of the indigenous peoples of America

P. Salvador Cleofás Murguía, SDB

Just as the incarnation did not take place without Mary, evangelization has not been nor will be without taking Mary into account. The process of evangelization, of the inculturation of the Gospel in America has begun and continues with the maternal presence of Mary. With the missionaries, the Church believes that this process has been “a painful and prolonged birthing, comprised of the cross and the sword, where the maternal face of God has touched the heart of the entire people, born of the miscegenation of the cultures, of blood and the colors of complexion.”

Our Lady is imprinted upon the cloth with a brown, calm and serene face. Since the conquest of the people has been through a deadly war; She is presented as a pregnant woman, that is, bringing life and the future: the Son of God. Moreover, by choosing as mediator a poor indigenous man, Juan Diego, she touches the heart of the people with tender and maternal language: “My little son, do not be afraid, I am the Mother of the true God who created everything, you are not an orphan nor are you abandoned”. And so the people, not just the poor indigenous person, is in love with Mary and the fruit of her womb. Thus the Christian faith has had its initial proclamation in the person and message of Mary.

St. John Paul II declared in a very explicit way: “America, that historically has been and is a crucible of peoples, has recognized in the mestiza face of the Virgin of Tepeyac, (...) a great example of a perfectly inculturated evangelization”. For this reason, not only in the center and in the South, but also in the North of the Continent, the Virgin of Guadalupe is venerated as the Queen of all America”.

Like any salvific event, Guadalupe, which takes place in a historical moment and place, transcends borders, cultures, peoples, customs and reaches to the depths of the human being, and achieves conversion from the deepest part of the soul, the spirit and reason; is a profound encounter with God, who is always the first to take the initiative; realizing a change in life.

In this event of salvation is manifested, in a self evident way, the loving intervention of God in an evangelization carried out by Mary leading to a true conversion, as expressed in the gospel of John (Jn 2,5), when at the wedding feast of Cana, Mary, the Mother of God, directs herself with assurance and certitude to humanity: “Do Whatever he tells you”. It is she who brings us to his Merciful Son, to the Eucharist.

This is a wonderful story from whence evangelization of the entire American continent and beyond its borders begins, under the leadership of the Church.

Certainly a concrete, clear and objective sign of the importance of the Guadalupe event was the conversion of the indigenous people, who from that moment forward are counted by the thousands. And this is testified in historical sources: for example, Fray Toribio Motolinía, the great Franciscan missionary who besides indicating that the efforts made by the Franciscans resulted in a determined amount of baptisms of the indigenous people, could not deny that in the initial years the Indians remained reluctant to convert to Catholicism: “They were –declared the missionary– for five years very remote”. Besides he was conscious of the insignificance of the resources before the enormity of the work; its’ terrible problems and the uncertainty of whether the conversions were really sincere; the fear in all missionaries that piety was latent idolatry persisted during a long period of time and became an obsession for some along with Fray Diego de Duran. However, after the first years, Motolinia made mention of the great numbers of the indigenous who requested baptism and that the chronicles report numbered among the thousands.

A key aspect in this conversion is that Mary came to bring us her Son Jesus Christ. The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is Christocentric, since it situates her Son Jesus in the place that corresponds to Him, in the middle of everything and of the image. The pregnant Maiden-Mother who awaits Jesus Christ, carries Him in her womb, as the treasure which she offers to us. This is confirmed in the Nican Moteccpana: “In which it became evident that she came not only to show herself as the Queen of heaven, our precious Mother of Guadalupe, but also to aid the natives in their earthly miseries and she also wanted to give to them light and help so that they might know the true and only God and so that through Him they might see and know the life of heaven”¹. “To do this – continues the narration – she herself came to in-

roduce and strengthen the faith, that the reverend sons of St. Francis had already begun to spread”².

Fr. Francisco Javier Clavijero, S.J., wrote in 1782:

“Among the general gifts that God has given to Mexico through the Most Holy Virgin, the most important and greatest was the rapid extinction of idolatry in this vast kingdom (...)”³.

The great contemporary thinker of Chilean origin Fr. Joaquin Alliende Luco says:

“Inculturation has never been a smooth process, including at times moments of violence and struggle. A model of a freeing fruitful inculturation is Mary of Guadalupe. The evangelizing mission of the very first missionaries seemed destined to failure. After the apparitions of Tepeyac, the missionary situation changed radically. Unending processions of the indigenous people sought Baptism (...) Guadalupe appears as perhaps the most successful event in the history of the Church”⁴.

Mary leads the people to her Son, to be nourished by the very body and blood of Jesus. She teaches them to be brothers and sisters and to build and form a civilization of love.

That very initial proclamation of evangelization developed and passed through diverse moments during the history of the people of America. But it seems that 500 years have not been enough; it seems that the Virgin of Guadalupe is in search of new mediators, new testimonies, for a new evangelization. We are those she seeks, Salesians and new vocations with the humble attitude of sons and daughters, who will serve with the same attitude as Juan Diego. ■

¹ Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl., *Nican Moteccpana*, p. 307

² Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl., *Nican Moteccpana*, p. 307

³ Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl., *Imagen de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*, cap. 11. p. 595.

⁴ Joaquín Alliende Luco, *Para que nuestra América viva*, Ed. Nueva Patris, Chile 2007. P. 97.



Don Bosco and the Indigenous Missions of Latin America

Fr. Francesco Motto, SDB - Salesian Historical Institute

In the missionary awakening of the 19th century, the weak points and vague missionary aspirations of Don Bosco cultivated in his years of priestly formation and the beginning of his priesthood remained such until 1875. But during two decades of attention to the missionary world promoted by the ecclesial atmosphere of Turin and a decade of direct contacts with true missionaries, mainly bishops of areas considered “mission lands”, these became reality through his sons, the Salesian.

The definitive approval of the Salesian Constitutions (April of 1874) in which however, no traces of mission *ad gentes* is found caused the Salesian Society to dream of the moment to become international and to embrace missionary activity. As a matter of fact, the demand of priests for Italian immigrants in Buenos Aires and to direct a new school in that province was quickly welcomed by Don Bosco; but also rapidly (in January of 1875) with a stroke of genius. Don Bosco transformed it, in the Salesian imagination and also in public opinion itself, into a true missionary project among the Indians; to march toward the “great hordes of savages” of the Pampas and of Patagonia, where “neither the religion of Jesus Christ, nor civilization, nor commerce, had yet penetrated, where the European feet could not up to that time leave any trace.” Who knows if Don Bosco had not yet identified in those lands the cruel savages of the dream of a few years before, in which the Indians, after having killed other missionaries, welcomed with affection the Salesians!

And even before the expedition, he mobilized an effort to get an Apostolic Vicariate established but only managed to do so in 1883. In like manner, the project “to Patagonia, to Patagonia, God wills it!” also remained in suspension due to the hard local reality, whether religious (anticlericalism, masonry, liberalism, Protestantism) or social (political instability, economics and commerce, a nationalism which is hostile to the Catholic Church, problems unresolved of the indigenous peoples whose lands were being occupied) or immigration (Italians “more “indianized” than the Indians in clothing and religion”). “Later around the middle of January of 1877 Don Bosco proposed to the Holy See the establishment of one, two or three Vicariates, Fr. Cagliero, who was about to return to Italy, immediately took it upon himself to calm such enthusiasm.”

In May of 1878, the first attempt to arrive by sea to the North of Patagonia failed. Only in April of 1879 were the doors of Patagonia opened to the Salesians, in particular through the problematic military chaplaincy of the famous “desert campaign” which delivered the final blow to the extermination of the Indians. In the middle of August, the Archbishop of Buenos

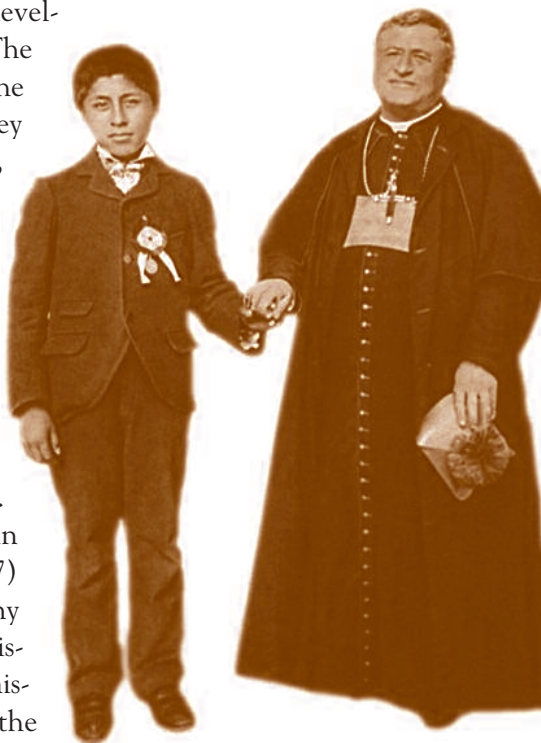
Aires, nonetheless, formally offered to Don Bosco the mission of Patagonia and the group of the first Salesians left on the 15th of July of 1880 to go to Rio Negro. There they would work in parishes and schools, but from there, they would reach out to all over the rivers of the Cordillera with itinerant missions among the Indians, perhaps together with the army (1881-1883).

Finally, the 16th of November of 1883 the Propaganda Fide established the central Apostolic Vicariate of Patagonia handing it over to Fr. Cagliero. Then on December 2, it was the turn of Fr. Fagnano to be named Apostolic Prefect of the rest of Patagonian Argentina and Chile, from the Falkland Islands and beyond to the Strait of Magellan Islands. The dream of the famous train ride from Cartagena in Colombia to Punta Arenas in Chile of the 10th of August of 1883 began to become reality, so much so that some Salesians, at the beginning of 1883, had come to found the house of Niteroi in Brazil from Montevideo.

Although with difficulties, both with the Archbishop of Buenos Aires as well as with the Argentine government in a moment of breaking off of relations with the Holy See (October of 1884) – consent was never given for the establishment of autonomous ecclesiastical circumscriptions – in 1887 a specific law created three vicariates but not in Patagonia. The difficulties in finding a balance between Rome, the Salesians and the Argentine and Chilean governments continued to exist even under Fr. Rua.

Missionary activity

While Don Bosco was alive missionary activity developed modeled after the praxis prevalent in Italy. The Salesians gained the respect of the communities of the faithful (Italians and indigenous people), whom they served by means of their “social action” (oratories, schools, groups of mutual aid, and bands) and by their “pastoral action” in churches and chapels (preaching, catechesis and sacraments). To the *Church of Mercy for the Italians* (1876) the parish of La Boca (1877) and successively works were added immediately especially for indigenous and small communities of Viedma and Carmen (1879-1880), Rio Gallegos (1885), Chos Malal (1887) and the Falkland Islands (1888) were founded. Parishes in Uruguay in Las Piedras (1880) and in Paysandú (1881) and Chile, in Punta Arenas (1887) were opened. In general, it cannot be said that many initiatives were made directly in the field of the mission *ad gentes*; however, it is also true that a strong missionary activity was also carried out through the establishment of 18 presences between schools, hospices



and schools and orphanages – also frequented by indigenous people – almost all strategically located in Argentina (9) and later in Uruguay (3), Brazil (2), Chile (3) and Ecuador (1).

As for the Salesian personnel at the death of Don Bosco, there were fifty SDB's in the six works of the Province of Fr. Costamagna; in turn the Apostolic Vicariate of Fr. Cagliero had extended the works left by the Vincentian Fathers and the Salesians military chaplains, that is itinerant missionaries, who had visited the, more or less civilized indigenous people, scattered colonies, in military posts in the frontiers and in uninhabited areas of the Pampas and Patagonia. And then the intensely active Fr. Fagnano had organized in Carmen the heterogeneous community of indigenous people, of black descendants of African slaves and of European immigrants and organize an Italian society of mutual aid.

At the beginning of 1884 the Salesians had administered 5,000 baptisms and explored 250,00 square kilometers of territory of northern Patagonia, adventuring through valleys and waterways, often in unlikely conditions. The boys and girls schools as well as the adjoining hospice of Viedma and Carmen welcomed a few hundred children, and a group of indigenous orphans learned trades and instrumental music. In the four following years, Fr. Costamagna, Msgr. Cagliero himself (during the biennium (1885-1887) and other Salesians traveled thousands of kilometers on horse back especially riding through valleys and deserts.

To these missionaries in the Rio Negro there would be added eleven other workers in Chile at the College of Concepción (with a mission in Malbec) and in the schools of arts and trades of Talca. In turn the Prefecture of southern Patagonia had a Salesian in the missions of Santa Cruz, the Falklands and four in Punta Arenas since April 1887 including Mgr. Fagnano, who, to make Tierra del Fuego the preferential field of his activity, had taken up residence in Punta Arenas (1,500 inhabitants). There he had to deal with the various parties that in 1883 had broken relations with the Holy See, before the adoption of “secularist laws”.

In Summary

The project of Don Bosco to establish in Argentine Patagonia a colony of Indians with an organized Christian and social life on the European model was revealed as pure fantasy, as it could not be otherwise because the Argentine government had never recognized an independent area within its territory (the Chilean government would do the same for the fugitives from Dawson Island after the death of Don Bosco). Moreover, both countries favored at the end of the century the *reducciones Salesianas* in Tierra del Fuego (a useful bulwark against the possible claims of other countries).



*Fr. Alberto Maria De Agostini
with el selk'nam Pachek in Tierra del Fuego.*

In those lands the antithesis “Civilization and barbarism” kept looming, that is, that policy which did not protect the land rights and customs of the indigenous people, but rather subjected them by force. The Salesians realized this and expressed a poignant sense of powerlessness against it. Their only chance to avoid violence was the slow penetration of the Gospel; but this would have required not only a long time, that the government did not favor, but also human resources of missionaries that the church in Argentina did not have available. The alternative of moving forward themselves among hostile Indians, because of the atrocities committed by whites (Christians), did not make sense. By contrast accompanying the soldiers, they could always prevent violence and mitigate indiscriminate killings, which was what really happened several times.

If the main purpose of Salesian work was the “salvation of the souls” of the natives, given their dire need, along with evangelization humanitarian aid was imposed, that is their survival, which was carried out probably by sharing fully their everyday life. It was a Salesian theological anthropology, which obviously could not have great influence in the Argentine army, but instead it was understood by the indigenous people when they distinguished between the missionaries and the military. In fact, for the Salesians, the “savages”, understood as those who had simply lagged behind in the natural evolution of civilization, were apt subjects to become “honest citizens” and “good Christians” through education, civilization and evangelization. More so through a style of pastoral action based on charity, without violating the human person by force.

There was no shortage of personal limitations: a rather romantic and edifying missionary formation, insufficient cultural preparation, geographical and historical information, inaccurate anthropology, lack of any experience of evangelization of the indigenous people, weak character and spiritual life. Added to that was a weak ecclesiology and missiology, the lack of a directory for missionaries, the lack of clarity in relations between the ordinaries of these places, the apostolic missionaries and religious missionaries, etc. But these shortcomings were offset by extreme generosity and a great spirit of sacrifice, a strong spirit of pioneers and admirable qualities of perception and adaptation to reality, an incredible entrepreneurial ability and practicality in extreme poverty, the courage and very zeal of the best missionaries, and the contagious enthusiasm of Don Bosco. The history of Argentina, the history of Patagonia, the history of the Salesian missions in these land were strongly intertwined with each other. ■



*Female Boarding Students
at the Colegio María Auxiliadora
de General Roca.*

From Initial Proclamation to the Local Church

Fr. Alfred Maravilla, SDB

The main purpose of missionary activity *ad gentes* is to start a Christian community in the midst of people who do not yet believe in Christ and where the Church has not yet taken root. This is a gradual growth with various stages. It starts with initial proclamation which is meant to stir up the interest of these people to know the person of Jesus Christ. Eventually this is followed by *kerygma*, catechumenate, conversion, baptism, life-long catechesis, building up of the structures of the local church, pastoral care of the community of faithful and the new evangelization of those who have lost their sense of faith and belonging to the Church.

In mission territories with very few Catholics, the Holy See, through the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, establishes some type of provisional ecclesial structure. This is in view of strengthening the new Catholic communities in a territory where a diocese could not yet be established due to the small number of Catholics, lack of basic structures of the local Church or sometimes also due to political reasons or ecumenical concerns.

Initially the Holy

Monsignor
Mario Fiandri, SDB
Vicar Apostolic
of Petén.



The Cathedral of the Apostolic Vicariate of Pucallpa.

See establishes a Mission *sui iuris* under a priest as *Ecclesiastical Superior*. As the number of Catholics grow an **Apostolic Prefecture** is established headed by a priest as *Apostolic Prefect*. As the Catholic community continues to grow and some ecclesial structures are developed the Apostolic Prefecture is raised to an **Apostolic Vicariate** headed by an *Apostolic Vicar* who is usually a titular bishop. In mission areas not directly under the responsibility of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, due to special circumstances, the Holy See may establish a **Territorial Prelature** which is above the Vicariates but not yet a diocese. Once there is a sufficient number of Catholics, local clergy and basic structures needed for a local Church the Apostolic Vicariate or Prelature is raised to a **Diocese** with its own *bishop* (CIC 368-371).

In most cases the Holy See entrusts a Mission *sui iuris* or Apostolic Prefecture to a clerical religious congregation whose task is to foster the growth of the mission territory until it becomes a full pledged Diocese. The responsibilities of the Congregation are stipulated in its agreement with the Holy See.

Missionary Territories entrusted to the Salesian Society

- **Apostolic Vicariate of Méndez (Ecuador)**
established and entrusted to the Salesian Society in 1893
- **Apostolic Vicariate of Chaco Paraguayo (Paraguay)**
established and entrusted to the Salesian Society in 1948
- **Apostolic Vicariate of Puerto Ayacucho (Venezuela)**
*established and entrusted to the Salesian Society in 1932 as **Apostolic Prefecture of Alto Orinoco**, elevated as **Apostolic Vicariate** in 1953 with its present name*
- **Territorial Prelature of Mixes (Mexico)**
established and entrusted to the Salesian Society in 1964
- **Apostolic Vicariate of El Petén (Guatemala)**
*established in 1951 as **Apostolic Administration of El Petén**, in 1984 it was elevated to an **Apostolic Vicariate** and entrusted to the Salesian Society in 1995*
- **Apostolic Prefecture of Azerbaijan**
*The **Mission sui iuris of Baku** was established and entrusted to the Salesian Society in 2000, in 2011 it was elevated to an **Apostolic Prefecture***
- **Apostolic Vicariate of Gambella (Ethiopia)**
established and entrusted to the Salesian Society in 2000
- **Apostolic Vicariate of Pucallpa (Peru)**
established in 1956 and entrusted to the Salesian Society in 2008.



The Cathedral of the Apostolic Vicariate of Méndez

Initial Proclamation in the Mixepolitana Prelature of Mary Help of Christians

Fr. Miguel Ángel Lezama, SDB

The missionary zeal and apostolic passion of the first evangelizers of the central-eastern mountains of Oaxaca, Mexico is a contribution of the Dominicans (1548-1763) through preaching, catechesis and formation of individuals and communities in all the ethnic groups and populations in those regions: Mixes, Chinantecos and Zapotecs. They were followed by tireless service of diocesan priests between the years 1763 to 1966.

Tlahuitoltepec was the first parish entrusted to the SDBs on October 24, 1962, thus they initiated the missionary expeditions to Oaxaca, joined in 1964 by the FMAs. With Father Braulio Sánchez Fuentes as leader a period of evangelizing presence began, characterized by a closeness and kindness. Their ancestors passed on to the soul of

the Mixe many values and a pride in never having been conquered; the presence of the devotion to Mary Help of Christians would win the native soul; flourishing in music as a language of veneration of the Mother of God.

Along with the parishes, to enhance the Christian life of communities, 6 years after the arrival of the Salesian missionaries, the first boarding school IMCI (*Instituto para el Mejoramiento de las Comunidades Indígenas*) was created for the Mixe area, with the vision of training the future laity as *true builders of their communities*. The seed of the Gospel in education has borne much fruit, because from this center many public servants have come; men and women of good will. This school brought together SDBs and FMAs for

Seminarians
of the San Juan Bosco
Seminary

the service of children and their families.

And in 1990 the center for the area Chinanteca CECACHI (*Centro Educativo Cultural y Agropecuario Chinanteco*) was established. Currently they are served by 2 other elementary schools.

The desire and conviction of the formation of laity for evangelization and human promotion, has accompanied the 4 pastoral plans of these 50 years since its canonical erection as Prelature. Its 3 Salesian Bishops: Bishop Braulio Sanchez F, Luis Felipe Gallardo and currently Hector Guerrero, created and supported training centers and programs to provide good leaders (assistants, catechists and parents) for the communities.

On February 4, 2009, the Apostolic Nuncio presided over the blessing of the first phase of the San Juan Bosco Diocesan Minor Seminary (indigenous seminary) in order to foster the inculturation

of the Gospel, to date the clergy of the Prelature has already reached 16 priests and 44 seminarians.

Countless volunteers, men and women, have enriched and have been enriched in this evangelizing service.

In 2013 Mateo Morales, the first indigenous priest of the prelature went to the Father's House, and in 2014 followed by Concepción Perez Georgina (Conchita) lay missionary: models of apostolic dedication, seed of new forces.

The missionary heart of Don Bosco bequeathed to his spiritual family this conviction of all the baptized, so the Prelature has been enriched and blessed by a large number of *ad gentes* missionaries coming from Italy, Spain, Costa Rica. At the same time this local Church is maturing to become also missionary. ■

Chaco Paraguayo: Land of Initial Proclamation!

Sr. Graciela Fernández Candia, FMA

The Chaco Paraguayo, is the land of the initial proclamation of Jesus, difficult and dangerous, particularly in the Upper Paraguay, taking into account that we are still in the early days of reflection and study concerning it.

Missionary journeys in the Paraguayan Chaco were undertaken in search of a favorable place¹ to found the mission, once the agreements between Paraguayan Bishop Juan Symphorian Bogarín and the Salesian Congregation were established in the years 1917-1918, noting the situation in which the people of the Chaco are



*Monsignor Gabriel Escobar, SDB
Vicar Apostolic of Chaco Paraguayo*

found: "dispersed Christian inhabitants in the forests of the Chaco spend a life of very lamentable moral hardships, the Word cannot be directed to them together because they live in isolated and unstable housing,"² the

riverside populations tormented by frequent floods, do not allow the implementation of a systematic pastoral approach. Given this sad situation, where could the mission building be built for the indigenous people? They had to find an appropriate solution.

Upon finding the long awaited site: Napegue, the first permanent settlement of the missions was created, the model developed was the *Reduccion*³ where indigenous families are gathered together directed by the Salesians of Don Bosco, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and non-indigenous Christian families that serve as models of Christian family life. The initial proclamation of Jesus in this period can be defined in these terms: “*conversion and civilization of the Indians*”⁴ through schools, catechesis, administration of the sacraments, Christian associations as well as teaching manual and agricultural work.

From this place the different riverside populations will be pastorally accompanied. Gradually with the increase of missionary personnel other houses are to be founded from Puerto Pinasco to Bahia Negra bordering Bolivia.

Missionaries guided by the orientations of the Second Vatican Council and its documents⁵, deepen the implications of the Gospel in the heart of indigenous cultures, become aware of the seeds of the Word present, give way to overcome ethnocentrism, revaluing the indigenous culture and giving space to the role of the indigenous people in their own organization and development. In this regard the formation of local pastoral workers will be strengthened to facilitate the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus within the framework of each ethnic group.

By the 1990s the ministry of communication is developed with the creation of community radios, an element enabling the awareness, catechesis and communication between distant peoples.

Given the demands of history⁶ involving deep reflection on missionary activity, styles of committed accompaniment are developed in the struggle for land, the creation of “popular” organizations, animation, promotion and self-management of projects interacting with various institutions.



Currently the initial proclamation of Jesus is lived through a simple, intimate and joyful witness, valuing the uniqueness of each culture, of each village in the expression of the Gospel within their own culture.

The missionaries are the promoters of growth in faith, animators, guides who encourage Christian maturity, willing to be interrogated and to let themselves be transformed. They are found in parish communities, in indigenous communities, dedicating themselves to the formation of pastoral agents, accompanied by the animators, present in the liturgical celebrations of the chapels and oratories, creating an educational environment in the boarding school, or accompanying the management day care centers which offer also meals, as well as in the promotion of the dignity of women, and indigenous vocations.

The initial proclamation of Jesus offers a wide horizon. Jesus is the great news proclaimed and welcomed but which still needs to be deepened, to provide answers to current questions, to the challenges that the surrounding culture puts forth, able to create a Christian humanism rooted in values and a strong and deep faith. ■

¹ Salesian Central Archives, A 902 0101 - A 902 0106

² Salesian Central Archives, A 903 010104

³ The permanent presence of the Salesian Congregation will be realized in 1925, as first Catholic presence in the history of evangelization of the Chaco from the initial Jesuit attempts between 1610 and 1613.

⁴ S. Congregatio Consistoriales. Salesian Central Archives, A 902 0106

⁵ AD, EN, Documents of CELAM

⁶ Today the Paraguayan Chaco continues to deal with the encroachment of their territories, the indiscriminate sale of land to foreign entrepreneurs by the Paraguayan government, without regard to the people who lived there for a long time. The lack of government policy is observed in the absence or ineffectiveness of basic services (potable water, sanitation, educational institutions, passable roads, etc.)



The Salesians and the Indigenous Peoples in Latin America

Fr. Juan Bottasso, SDB

What inflamed the missionary zeal of Don Bosco was the knowledge that many souls risked dying without baptism and be eternally lost. The purpose of the mission, according to theology then, was not to preach the Kingdom or implant the Church, but to go to save souls.

When the projects of John Bosco were becoming reality, these “souls” began to take on the faces of the Patagonian Indians and so began the Salesian missionary adventure.

After the evangelization of the Mapuches and Fueguinos; the Salesian Congregation was entrusted with the evangelization of other peoples: Baroro, Shuar (Jivaro), Xavante, Yanomami ... The dedication of the missionaries to the task was complete and showed measurable results, as a whole.

The stories of missionary adventures filled pages and pages of the Salesian Bulletin, causing readers to think that a large number of religious were dedicated to this task. But the reality was different: the Salesian work in Latin America was essentially urban. Even with large waves of migrants, in the late nineteenth century, the demographic situation of the continent was not substantially changed, the percentage of indigenous people was still very high, especially in the Andes, Central America and Mexico, but the Salesians did not work with them. The object of their efforts were “primitive” groups, which were, statistically, a very low percentage in the world of indigenous Americans.

Why did not the Salesians address the broad masses of the indigenous people? The answer is complex.

Local churches were asking almost exclusively for the founding of schools, to address the advance of liberalism and to regain visibility in society. Many governments, even liberals, viewed with sympathy the ability of the Salesians to encourage technical education still absent in almost all countries.

The promotion of the indigenous people was not seen as a priority. They could suffer exploitation and poverty, they could be marginalized, but for the Church their salvation was not in danger, because they were baptized.

It was especially following the Second Vatican Council that the vision began to change, and also that of the Salesians. The “preferential option for the poor”, on which the document of Medellin put the stress, opened their eyes to a reality that had been almost ignored.

Sociological studies revealed that the indigenous people turned out to be the poorest of the poor, because, besides suffering tremendous hardships, they were discriminated against and victims of widespread racism.

It was in the seventies in Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala, that the Salesian missionaries began to approach the indigenous problem, seen in its real dimension and within the overall context of society. The issue had obvious political implications and demanded a serious knowledge of anthropology,

to meet the challenges of cultural change. It was also urgent to undertake a vigorous defense of the territory, at a time when all states were struggling to expand lands for agriculture and livestock at the expense of the areas occupied by the indigenous peoples.

Both social science and theology began to present a new vision of the indigenous peoples. On the one hand it stopped considering them as backward people, but as bearers of great values; and equally important the churches no longer limited their concern to the salvation of their souls, but rather also to the promotion of the people. And the person, one understands, can be fully understood only as a member of a group within a network of relationships.

Between the 1970s-1990s there were intense activities. Several groups were helped to organize politically, intercultural bilingual schools were promoted, collaboration with anthropologists, linguists and historians established research that led to publications which were appreciated throughout the continent. In Ecuador in just a few years, public opinion came to identify the Salesians as allies of indigenous

people and specialists in the problems related to them.

Lately that fervor has lost momentum. The causes are multiple. The global scenario has changed, globalization has put many projects in crisis, urbanization is shifting large indigenous masses to the cities, where they are losing the concern to maintain their identity.

The Salesian personnel is declining, and young people are more oriented towards other types of emergencies, such as street children and youth at risk.

Will the Salesians be capable of rethinking, in line with new challenges, to remain faithful to their missionary vocation? ■



Fr. Roberto Cappelletti and the youth of the Salesian Mission of Iauaretê - Amazonia (Brazil)

The Salesians and the Indigenous Peoples of the Ecuadorian Andes

Fr. Robert Garcia, SDB

Young Salesians came dreaming of a field of apostolate among the most marginalized indigenous sectors, to show “Christ of the indigenous” with a committed liberating evangelization, to restore the dignity of the indigenous people, a Christ who is close to

them, a poor Christ, like them, but with great hope and faith. Thus the Zumbahua Mission was born on January 2, 1972 with the approval of the General Council in response to the need to help the indigenous people, to value their culture, language, traditions, to train women to



be the educators and catechists of their children without forgetting their own history.

Following this on November 10, 1976 a new mission was born in an area known as “Tallagua” comprising Salinas, Simiátug and Facundo Vela to care for a group of approximately 50,000 indigenous peasants, who were exploited and abandoned. The mission begins with Fr. Pio Baschiroto as Rector together with Fathers Antonio Polo and Alberto Panerati. With Facundo Vela an evangelizing ministry was organized: in Simiátug the center for training and formation of women was born; in Salinas literacy courses, a factory for traditional woven articles, and factory for the production of cheese and chocolates were established known even now as “The Salinerito”. Here there is promotion of work, participation, collaboration and human and Christian dignity of indigenous peoples which are generating opportunities for personal and spiritual growth.



Today the Salesian presence in the Andean missions serves 8 parishes, 189 indigenous and peasant communities with the support of 133 catechists who collaborate in the work of evangelization.

The challenges for the Province are:

- Redefining the educational and evangelizing service, in order to be more effective in these realities.
- Providing our collaborators with a knowledge of the life and mission which the Salesians are rendering.
- Rethinking appropriate attention to indigenous people in urban areas.
- Preparing pastoral workers serving the indigenous pastoral effort respecting and accepting their customs and world views.

The road is still long and as Salesians we continue to respond to today's needs being signs and bearers of God's love to the poorest. ■



The Salesians and the Aymara and Quechua peoples in Bolivia

Fr. Juan Francisco Aparicio, SDB

The Salesians in Bolivia accompany and encourage the pastoral journey of the Aymara and Quechua peoples in several places where they are present in Bolivia.

The Escoma mission began in 1972. It is

located in the middle of the Bolivian plateau, more than 3800 meters above sea level, near Lake Titicaca, in the department of La Paz. The vast majority of the population is Aymara, a people of ancient culture and tradi-

tions. The main work done in this area is evangelization through the care of three parishes, Escoma, Carabuco and Puerto Acosta. It has also developed an important support for the social development of the area through a training center and the formation of farmers in agricultural issues. It also has a secondary school which trains new generations of young Aymaras. It also features “Sariri Radio”, a local radio station in the Aymara language that provides a valuable service of integration throughout the entire area.

In the department of Cochabamba, two missionary works cater mainly to the Quechua people living in the entire region. The work of Kami, on the one hand, realizes pastoral and social promotion work since 1977. The parish of San José Obrero has about 20,000 inhabitants, about 10,000 in Kami, especially miners, and the rest in the indigenous farm communities. Within the parish there are about 100 indigenous communities (70 Quechuas and 30 Aymaras), scattered over a wide area, making it difficult to maintain systematic frequent visits. It has a strong social emphasis in the implementa-



tion of agricultural projects for communities with a range of activities: production, training, technical assistance, promotion and development; with a network of more than 50 rural educational units throughout the region; with the construction of a hydroelectric plant that generates resources for sustaining the work; supporting the development of rural women; boarding schools for young people from remote communities, and road construction. In the field of communication, it is “Don Bosco Radio and TV” that provides an educational, cultural and evangelizing service that is much appreciated.

The mission of Independencia covers an area of 600 square kilometers and serves about 60 indigenous and peasant communities of Quechua origin. The Salesians have

been present since 1986 with the arrival of Fr. Pascual Cerchi and later the founding of the religious community. The service provided ranges from evangelization in the communities, the training of native catechists, to training and education of children and youth with the schools, the center of agricultural training and social communication with the “Santo Domingo Savio” community radio. ■



Salesian Presence in the Peruvian Andes

Salesian Missionary Plan in Valle Sagrado de los Incas

The Salesians have been present in the Peruvian Andes since the early years of their arrival. In 1891 the work started in Lima. Since 1897 the Salesians came to Arequipa. In 1905 they went to Cusco, in 1923 they arrived in Yucay located in the Valle Sagrado de los Incas. This very year they also arrived in the Mantaro Valley in the city of Huancayo. A few years later, in 1929, they arrived in Puno and, finally, in Ayacucho.

In 1923 the Salesians settled in Valle Sagrado de los Incas, with a work called Granja Salesiana de Yucay (*Salesian Farm of Yucay*) to educate the children of the farmers in the area. This work existed in the Province until 1971. But providentially in 1973 the Parish of Calca was entrusted to Congregation and in 1974 also the parishes of Huay and Yucay. Since 1974 new missionary residences have been opened like Amparaes, Quebrada Honda, and Lares designed to meet the pastoral needs the communities established in the Andes. Later in Monte Salvado a training center for the promotion of youth of the area and for the training of pastoral workers were opened.

The Salesian mission extends into 3 zones, which are as follows: **El Valle Sagrado** is a beautiful valley 2,900 meters above sea level. The preferred crop, among others, is corn. The Salesians are present in Calca with a work directed by lay people; The **Zona Alta** is between 3,500 to 5,000 meters high. The weather is cold and humid and even glacial in the highest parts. The main crops in this area are potatoes, root vegetables and others that grow in this altitude. In this area we have 2 presences in Amparaes and Lares; the **Zona Baja** is one of warm weather, it is crossed by the river Yanatile which, during the rainy season, periodically sweeps away many roads and crops. Here in this zone the Parish of Quebrada and Monte Salvado School are located.

The population of the territory is calculated around 65,407 people according to the census of 2007. Almost 98% are baptized and consider themselves Catholic. The predominant race is





Andean Quechua at 60%, the mestizo follow with 40%. Most live through agriculture, and to a lesser degree, handicrafts. Most young people study in semi-urban centers. Very few come to stay in Cusco for further studies that very few finish. Usually they live alone near the centers of education and, therefore, are easy prey to vices that do them great harm. ■

Indigenous and Salesian

Fr. Reginaldo Lima Cordeiro, SDB

At the end of the seventeenth century and early eighteenth century some indigenous peoples of Rio Negro experienced persecution by non-indigenous explorers. Among these people, were also my ancestors of the Arañaos ethnicity. At that time, some people died from various diseases, but many others were killed; while still others escaped from the river bank and went to live in the forest. The Salesians, upon reaching those lands, approached the indigenous people and won their confidence by showing that they were not bad people. This gave my people the possibility of reintegrating as an ethnic group and of returning to live along the riverside. Living on the banks of the river meant peace and stability; the ability to organize and live according to their own cultural values such as a sense of authority, respect for parents, valorization of marriage, the sense of celebration, sharing in the abundance of hunting and fishing, and finally the possibility to organize themselves religiously with their own rites, songs and dances.

The presence of the Salesians among my people has been very important in this process of stability in their own land. Being an indigenous Salesian is a grace, but it requires knowing how to combine the Salesian charism with the values of my people. Just as the Salesian

charism has a proposal for life; so also the culture of the Arañaos people has a proposal for life. Faced with this reality, the challenge is knowing how to integrate the various values of indigenous culture with religious values of Salesian religious life. At the same time this is an opportunity that enriches me with more elements to offer at work as an indigenous Salesian and enrich people with whom I come into contact with by sharing our way of praying, reasoning, and living life. All this helps the process of the integration of indigenous theology with non-indigenous theology. Being indigenous, Salesian and a priest, I promote the evangelization of the Brazilian people by witness and offering cultural values which strongly identify my being an indigenous Salesian with a sense of religiosity, community, etc. My way of interacting with society also contributes to a vision that promotes intercultural dialogue in the Brazilian culture that is made up of indigenous peoples, blacks and whites and the inculturation of the Gospel in different geographical contexts of the country. ■



The Sisters of the Resurrection

Fr. Eusebio Muñoz, SDB - Delegate of the Rector Major for the Salesian Family

The founder is Salesian Fr. George Puthenpura, a native of India, Poovathode in Kerala. Since 1970, Fr. George is a missionary among the Indians of Guatemala. At the time of Fr. George, hundreds of indigenous boys, even though 90% of them were illiterate, were happy to bring the good news of the Gospel from village to village. The girls also wanted to do the same. That possibility was opened with the coming of the Daughters of Charity.

On September 15, 1977 new 'volunteers' living with these sisters and guided by Fr. George began an experience of community life with the prospect of making it permanent in an independent house. In May of that year, Fr. Ricardo Chinchilla, Provincial of the Salesians, had made the unexpected proposal to organize them as indigenous religious com-

munity. Fr. Ricardo indicated the procedures and provided the means to do so. It was providential. On January 31, 1980 three young women in that group expressed the desire to form a 'small community' in order to serve their fellow peasants.

On January 31, 1987 the community was approved by Bishop Gerardo Flores Reyes. Luisa became the first Superior. The bishop received the vows of the 14 sisters and admitted to perpetual vows the first three. Two houses of the community are recognized. The 'Talita Kumi' Center becomes the most significant work of the congregation.

The small community is truly an inculturated community: they are all indigenous, even though it is not a requirement of the statutes. At the beginning most were illiterate, but that did not stop them from communicating a

profound and heartfelt cultural richness. Their apostolate is to inculturate the Gospel and help the poorest through catechesis and human and social development, especially among young people and women, promoting literacy, health education, family life, domestic life, agriculture and trade with small networks of micro credit cooperatives, etc.

A whole new experience with a significant motto: "Christ is





don their own culture. The *Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection* is a beautiful expression of the pastoral love of the Salesian Family for the indigenous peoples.

The 'small community' is currently composed of 59 professed, 12 novices, 15 candidates and 23 applicants, all indigenous of different ethnic groups. ■

risen, we also resurrect with Him." The paschal candle is the symbol of the community.

Each one of the thirty groups of the Salesian Family look to Don Bosco and make a particular contribution to the it brings to the Church. The Sisters of the Resurrection remind us to look at the insignificant ones with special attention. These include many indigenous peoples who are often forgotten and even forced to aban-




The Salesians and the Preservation of the Cultures of the Indigenous Peoples

Fr. Georg Lachnitt, SDB

The founders of the current *Museu das Culturas Dom Bosco* (Campo Grande), in 1948, had very clear ideas: "the natives with their cultures will disappear, hence we have to preserve their memory in a museum."



Today, nearly seventy years after the founding of the *Museum Dom Bosco*, we find that indigenous peoples and their cultures, in this case the "Bororo", the "Xa-

A photograph showing a group of indigenous people, likely from South Mato Grosso, in a dugout canoe on a river. The canoe is filled with people, some of whom are holding long wooden poles or spears. The background is a dense, lush green forest. The image is part of a larger page with a colorful, abstract border on the left side.

vante” and many others, have survived with their cultures, some preserving them and practicing them with much attachment, others, instead, search in the Museum documentation collections about them and their valuable ancestral culture. It is lamentably true that with the arrival of the conquering world, many indigenous cultures have disappeared because they could not cope up with the devastating impact of the culture of the conquerors.

Since the beginning of our missionary activity among the natives, there were always missionaries who were devoted to research and collect cultural and linguistic elements of the various groups with whom they came into contact. This was the beginning of a great work, continually growing, that demanded more space and more collaborators, thus requiring an ever increasing systematization until the time came that all the wonderful missionary work required that they be arranged in a museum to ensure preservation, dissemination and finally to be put at the service of the life and culture of the indigenous peoples. Thus they can identify in the museum the wonderful signs and symbols of their own culture.

To all this must be added the concern of indigenous people and the legitimate curiosity to know where it all comes from, where they originated and how that culture was formed. This gave rise to an insistent demand to recover what was exhibited in the Museum bringing it back to their land. The indigenous peoples of South Mato Grosso did not hand over their symbols nor cultural elements to the Museum invoking their private and inalienable proprietary rights.

The concept of a museum, understood as a simple deposit, without underestimating its artistic value of cultural elements, seems superseded today. The Museum must become

an active force for indigenous cultures, i.e., it must be a center associated with research and production of written materials and audio-visuals, in order to produce culture. In other words, today researchers closely linked to indigenous communities, and with the active participation of the stakeholders, must produce increasingly consistent cultural documentation, and spread it among its own people, inside and outside the area where the culture originated.

The development of new agricultural techniques for food production, as well as school education, linguistic research, teaching, health care, constitute a responsibility of the missionary, who perceives the need to develop research derived from the ancestral wisdom of the indigenous people. Also research on traditional indigenous health with respect to modern medicine, as well as the issue of traditional food, together with current research in both fields, can provide a definite improvement in the lives of these people.

Two aspects are important today to keep alive the Museum: these are the establishment of subsidiaries of museums present in some villages where there are indigenous populations, which can investigate and compile data digitally. These are the museums in the mission of Sangradouro Xavante and Bororo Mahuta. The directors of both museums have regular meetings with *Museo das Culturas Dom Bosco* to exchange views and information on the research being carried out.

We currently have the “*Puntos de Cultura*” and those who are in Caarapó do Mato Grosso do Sul. There is a communication system using computers distributed to the different indigenous peoples, to gather input and data from the different peoples of the Kaiowá, Guarani and make the of collected material available to all. This proves to be a strong motive to revitalize and encourage a territory



where the natives were deported; they, even with many difficulties, begin to recover their own particular identification and through the “*Puntos de Cultura*”, exchange various cultural elements to ensure their ritual and spiritual survival.

Finally, in general terms, research on valuable ancestral religion, enriched by the newness of the proclamation of the Gospel, which strengthens, elevates and purifies, can bring about, with the contribution of missionary theologians and the indigenous people, a new, richer and festive expression of the wonder that the gospel of the Lord produces.

All these are elements that should be borne by museums, living entities and assets, in order to contribute significantly to the preservation and growth of indigenous culture. And for that, the missionaries, together with external researchers, must give their contribution so that indigenous peoples may ensure their own survival and the preservation of their cultures against a political system that is not sympathetic to the presence of these peoples. ■

The Indigenous Saints

St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin



Juan Diego was born in 1474 in Cuauhtitlan. He was of chichimecas Indian ethnicity. A simple man, full of candor, without duplicity, docile and humble. When he met the Franciscan missionaries, he received the water of baptism and embraced the faith, always faithfully incarnating the teachings he received. He did not hesitate to travel 20 km. every Saturday and Sunday to attend catechism and Holy Mass. He had the grace that his wife Maria Lucia shared his faith. She died in 1529.

The Mother of God set her eyes upon this virtuous indigenous man to entrust him with a mission. On Saturday December 9, 1531 Juan Diego headed towards the Church. He walked barefoot, as did those of his social status, and protected himself against the cold with a tilma. When he skirted Tepeyac, Mary called his attention addressing him in his Nahuatl language: *"Juanito, Juan Dieguito ... I am the sinless ever Virgin*

Mary, Mother of the true God!". She instructed him to ask Bishop Juan de Zumarraga to build a church right there. The bishop reacted with total disbelief. Juan Diego returned to the site the next day and explained to the Virgin what had happened, humbly suggesting to choose of another person more prominent than himself. Four apparitions sealed the sublime conversations that took place between her and Juan Diego.

On December 12, the Mother consoled, encouraged and told Juan Diego to climb up the hill – where flowers did not grow – to pick flowers and give them to her. He believed, obeyed and came down with a lush bouquet gathered in his tilma.

Later, when Juan Diego managed to be received by the bishop, upon opening wide his tilma, it was discovered that the image of the Virgin had been imprinted on the tilma with beautiful colors. Through this miracle, the bishop believed, repented his incredulity and fulfilled the will of Mary.

Eventually Juan Diego moved into a humble house next to the church. He devoted his life to prayer, to penance and to make known the miracle among his people. He devoted himself to the care of the original chapel dedicated to the Virgin of Guadalupe and to receive the many pilgrims who came to her. He died on May 30, 1548 with a reputation for holiness.

"The message of Christ through his Mother took the central elements of indigenous culture, purified them and gave them the definitive sense of salvation," said John Paul II during his canonization in 2002. *"So, Guadalupe and Juan Diego have a deep ecclesial and missionary meaning and are models of perfectly enculturated evangelization."* ■

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha



Kateri Tekakwitha was born in 1656 in Ossernenon, an Iroquois village of along the Mohawk River in what is now the State of New York. When she was four years a smallpox outbreak in the village of Tekakwitha took the life of her parents and younger brother, leaving her an orphan. Tekakwitha was adopted by her two aunts and her uncle who was also the chief of the Mohawks. Tekakwitha was 18 years old when a Jesuit missionary founded a chapel near her village. Her uncle did not like the strange new religion of the missionary, but tolerated his presence. However, Tekakwitha was fascinated by the new stories she heard about Jesus and wanted to learn more about him and wanted to become a Christian. The Jesuit persuaded the uncle to allow Tekakwitha to go to catechism. The following Easter, Tekakwitha was baptized. She was 21 years old. She was given the name Kateri, which is Catherine in Mohawk. Kateri became intensely devout, but

her family and the locals did not accept that she should choose Christ. Her family denied her food on Sundays because she did not work that day. Children insulted her and threw stones at her.

They threatened to torture or kill her if she did not renounce her religion. Kateri left her village due to growing hostility and fled more than 300 km by forests, rivers and swamps to reach a Catholic mission near Montreal. She lived in the cabin of a native woman who was a Christian. Despite living in a Christian village, she had to face a lot of cultural pressure to marry and to participate in traditional rites. Her frequent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament and the practice of praying the rosary, which she wore around her neck, were her strength to live her faith. Kateri spent her life teaching the young and helping the poor and sick in the village. In 1679 she made the vow of perpetual virginity and totally devoted the rest of her life to the Lord. To our knowledge, this was the first time a native American did this. She died on April 17, 1680. On June 22, 1980 Kateri Tekakwitha became the first native Indian American to be beatified by Pope John Paul II. During the canonization in 2012, Pope Benedict XVI stressed that “in her faith and culture mutually enriched each other.” ■

The Three Martyrs of Tlaxcala

Blessed Cristobal, Antonio and Juan are three indigenous adolescents from Tlaxcala, Mexico who show us that a convinced and deep faith should lead us to love God and defend the cause of God.

Christopher, was born in Atlilhuetzia, Tlaxcala, son of Acxotécatl the principal chief. The date of his birth is unknown, being martyred in 1527 possibly at 12 or 13 years of age. Acxotécatl had four children, of whom Christopher was the eldest and the favorite. Christopher learned much of Christian doctrine listening to the missionary friars and so he requested Baptism. He was trained to convert his father and his servants who still practiced the worship of their old





idols. Because words alone were not enough to convince his father, Christopher decided to take a radical decision and proceeded to break the idols and spill the pulque with which his father became drunk. His father who did not accept the conversion to which his son invited him, called him home from the rectory and pretending that it was a party, locked himself with his son inside and beat him to death with a club. Then he was thrown into a bonfire by his stepmother Xochipapalotzin.

Antonio was the grandson of Acxotécatl therefore was his future heir. He was born between 1516 and 1517; and was martyred in 1529, the same age as Christopher. Juan was a vassal of Antonio. Juan was from the same place and was actually the same age

as Antonio.

Two years after the martyrdom of Christopher, a monk named Bernardino Minaya along with another companion arrived in Tlaxcala. They were headed for the Huaxyacac province and asked Friar Martin de Valencia to provide them with a boy to help them in their evangelizing mission. To this request, Friar Martin immediately offered Antonio and Juan.

Friar Bernardino clearly explained to them the dangers they would face because it would not be an easy task to evangelize a people eminently idolatrous and so the possibility of martyrdom was latent. So in Cuahutinchán, Puebla, upon entering a house and when they were smashing idols, two natives arrived with some oak logs who without so much as a word, vented their anger on the boy Juan. Antonio, upon seeing the cruelty with which they executed his servant, did not flee, but dropped the few idols he had in hand to help Juan, but the two natives had already killed him and then did the same with Antonio.

The martyrdom of these indigenous adolescents was possible because they preferred to sacrifice their lives, full of love and faith, and chose to defend their convictions. They were beatified in 1990 during the second visit of Pope John Paul II to Mexico. During his visit to Mexico in 2012 Pope Benedict XVI, proposed these little martyrs as an example to youth. ■

Blessed Zeferino Namuncurá

An Indigenous Saint formed by the Sons of Don Bosco

P. Jesús Jurado, SDB

The father, the Cacique Namuncurá, a strong and tough guy, with a loud voice and authority, was approached by his son. With resolute and determined voice he said, "Father, things cannot continue this way. I want to study to be useful to my people!" The words of the small

boy, had stuck like a dagger in the deepest heart of his father. It was not the child who spoke, but a son of Don Bosco who learned from the Salesians that he should be another Dominic Savio to change the situation of the people.

In fact, the situation of Chimpay, he had seen with regret the destruction and decay of a suffering people. Zeferino was no ordinary child, he was born with a deep intuition and a look that seeped to the depth of the soul.

The teenager who had rightly been nicknamed: the boy who “smiles with his eyes”, was born in Chimpay, Argentina, on August 26, 1886. Zeferino grows up in a typical Mapuche environment but thanks to Salesian formation his way of living life changes. The Cacique Manuel Namuncurá decided to place him in a School-Workshop of the Navy, where he entered as an apprentice carpenter. Zeferino does not feel right there. The father takes him to the Salesian school and goes to Pius IX School of Almagro. Zeferino is accepted and enters on the 20th of September 1897. Historians say that the life of Zeferino became transformed, as if he had gone to heaven, he was happy to be with the Salesians.

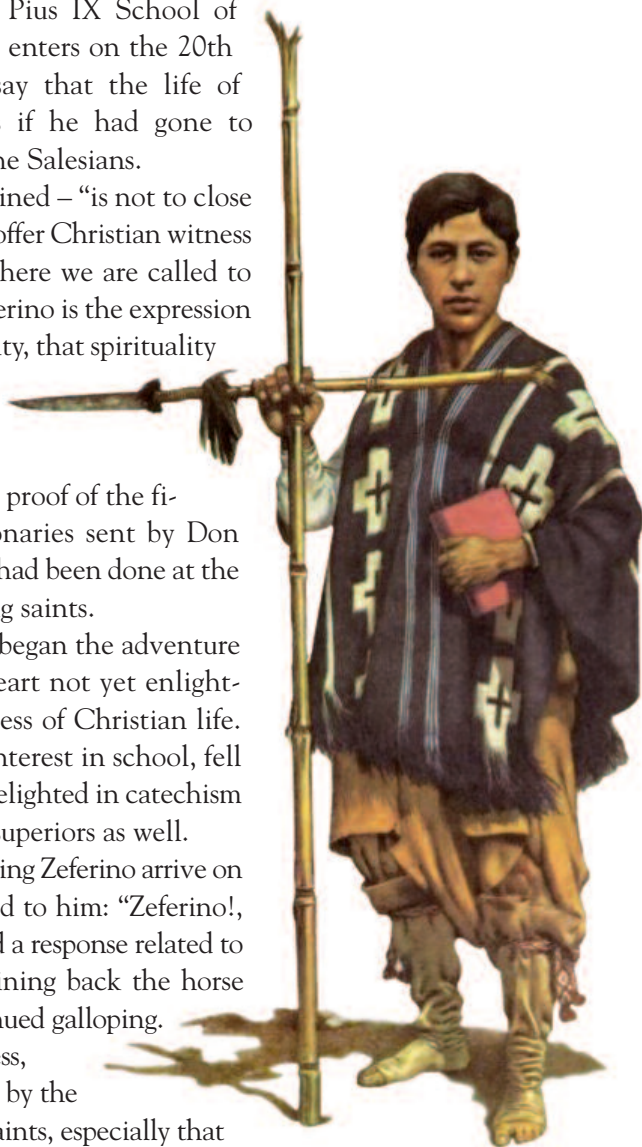
“Holiness” – Pope Francis explained – “is not to close one’s eyes but to live with love and offer Christian witness in the occupations of every day, where we are called to become saints.” The holiness of Zeferino is the expression and fruit of Salesian youth spirituality, that spirituality of joy, friendship with Jesus and Mary, fulfillment of one’s duties and self-giving to others.

Zeferino is the most convincing proof of the fidelity with which the first missionaries sent by Don Bosco succeeded in repeating what had been done at the Oratory of Valdocco: forming young saints.

At the school of Don Bosco he began the adventure of grace that would transform a heart not yet enlightened by faith into the heroic witness of Christian life. He immediately stood out for his interest in school, fell in love with the practices of piety, delighted in catechism and was friendly to everyone, and superiors as well.

One day, Francesco De Salvo, seeing Zeferino arrive on horseback like lightning, he shouted to him: “Zeferino!, what do you like best?”. He expected a response related to horsemanship, art, but the boy, reining back the horse replied: “Being a priest!”, and continued galloping.

Zeferino is a very Salesian holiness, germinated by the method proposed by the Salesians in the biographies of the saints, especially that of Dominic Savio written by Don Bosco himself. ■



Salesian Missionaries Yesterday and Today

United in Love for the Xavantes, Brothers through Martyrdom

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

On November 1, 1934, in an attempt to approach the new Xavantes tribe in Brazil, the Salesian missionaries Fr. John Fuchs and Fr. Peter Sacilotti were massacred. In a year rich in joy and satisfaction – 1934 is the year of the canonization of Don Bosco – chilling news came that made us immediately recall February 1930 when Monsignor Luigi Versiglia and Fr. Calixtus Caravario were killed, both revered today as protomartyr saints.

Fr. John Fuchs, a veteran of the missions, was born in Pfaffnau, of Canton Luzern in Switzerland on May 8, 1880. At twenty, when he felt the vocation to religious life, he went to Italy to the Salesian College of Penango, Monferrato. He had decided to prepare to hear the Lord's call. After receiving the cassock from the hands of Blessed Michael Rua in 1906, he went to Brazil, where having completed his studies at the Salesian houses of Lorena (SP) and Niterói (RJ), he was ordained a priest on February 4, 1912. As priest, he continued teaching for nearly two years, teaching physics and mathematics in the same school until overtaken by illness, he had to return to Europe to recover. Thank God his health was restored and he returned after the war to Brazil, on August 15, 1920, he became part of the "Sacred Heart Colony" (in Mato Grosso) to devote himself fully to the evangelization of the Boro-

ro Indians with admirable dedication and spirit of sacrifice. The missionary territory entrusted to the Salesian Congregation raised to Prelature Nullius in 1914 with the title Registro de Araguaia, stretched over an area of 246,800 square kilometers and had just barely 40,000 inhabitants. When Fr. Fuchs arrived at his residence, courageous missionaries had already toiled in favor of the civilized persons, scattered in the vast area, but also in pursuit of Indian tribes, confined in the vast virgin forests, with discreet correspondence on the part of the Bororos. All efforts had been, on the other hand deftly rejected by the Xavante tribe.

Fr. Peter Sacilotti was born in Lorena-SP (Brazil) to Italian parents on May 11, 1889. Having grown up and having been educated in the Salesian school in his hometown, he had responded enthusiastically to the Lord's call. And after receiving the cassock at Lavrinhas (SP), he studied philosophy with brilliant success, so that his superiors thought to reward his virtue and love of study and sent him to Italy to finish his theological studies at the Don Bosco International Theologate of Crocetta. He was ordained priest in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians on June 12, 1925 from the hands of Cardinal Gamba. Returning to his country, and made responsible for the care and teaching in schools of the Province in 1928 he

was named Rector of the school in Registro de Araguaya. But this was not the life of which he dreamed. His fervent spirit longed for the missionary apostolate and was happy only when superiors assigned him the difficult task of Xavantes.

The terrible tribe which for centuries was spoken about in Brazil, lived in villages scattered across a swathe of the Mato Grosso comprising hundreds of square kilometers between the Rio das Mortes and Kuluene, the largest branch of the Xingu River. Its habitat was the virgin jungle, without roads, where only those born there can move around safely. In 1932 Fr. Fuchs had devised a penetration plan: and that year marks the first cross, 5 meter high, planted in the Rio das Mortes river. Fr. Sacilotti shared in the plans with him and in a passionate zeal for the conversion of the Xavantes.

In 1934 Fr. Fuchs, staying alone in Santa Teresina, decided to move to Mato Verde, near the extreme limit of the Prelature, where in early September for a second time Fr. Sacilotti would return, having come from Araguaya bringing medicines, food and staff. There, in just over a month of feverish work they had the satisfaction of seeing finished both a residence for the Salesians and for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. But having learned that in the Rio das Mortes a large number of rafts had been spotted, evident sign of the presence of the Xavantes, they rushed to go back once again to Santa Teresita, where they arrived on October 24. Fr. Fuchs wrote his last letter there. It said: "The time is approaching for the Xavantes and also our time ...". The feeling responded exactly to the reality. Since the Xavantes often hid and fled, it was necessary to go in search of them; and behold then our missionaries who left again after a few days, bound for Santa Teresita.

It was the last trip. They had been a few hours in São Domingos and descended the river, when they spotted on the right bank two



'Xavantes'. Fr. Sacilotti and a Bororo who accompanied him, after shutting down the engine to slide slowly over the stream, and jumped over a small boat that they towed to reach the shore, which was quite high and steep. Getting there, Fr. Sacilotti saw no one; and climbing a tree, spotted deyo in the forest fifty 'Xavante'. He called Fr. Fuchs who arrived, spoke to the Indians in 'Caraja' but they responded from afar in a threatening tone; then, while fellow missionaries returned to the boat to get gifts and presents, suddenly a war cry sounded, followed by a sudden attack of the Xavantes. No one was present to account for what happened in those few minutes. The two missionaries, having remained alone, were killed with huge Xavante poles that left them on the ground next to each other with smashed skulls.

On the maps of Brazil, that place is called today "Barranco dos Mártires": the two Salesians had traveled together several times on the Rio das Mortes in search of the Xavante; together they had sighed, suffered and prayed for their conversion; together they faced death for their salvation '*quos Eidem passio fecit esse germanos*' (the same martyrdom made them brothers). ■

My Name is Yankuam`

Fr. Juan Bottasso, SDB

The Shuar and Achuar know Fr. Luis Bolla as Yankuam` (*bright star of sunset*) but also his Salesian confreres customarily call him this.

There are many ways to approach people from cultures different than one's own culture. The tourist who wants to see something different and take pictures with 'exotic' characters; the scholar who seeks to understand some seemingly odd behavior, looks and analyzes them with interest.

Yankuam was surely not the tourist, nor the simple researcher. He lived the Achuar culture, of course within the limits of his identity as a priest and religious. As mentioned, all he asked was to be accepted as a guest, which implies a remarkable renunciation of autonomy. The Achuar, when a guest is in their home, require the guest to work and adapt his life to their rhythm. The guest must knock down and load logs, clear roads, prepare for planting orchards. Their custom is rise up very early – at three or four in the morning – and gather around the hearth to drink the wayús (a kind of tea) and vomit it and so clean their stomach.

During those long early morning sessions, they recount their myths and speak of their wars. Yankuam` was grateful to be allowed to be present, to better know the details of the culture, to refine his skill in the language and take advantage of some breaks to proclaim the Word of God. Throughout his memoirs are countless cases in which he claims they listened to him with relish.

He was gradually realizing that that proclamation was percolating and began to sow doubts in their quest to avenge deaths.

It took a lot to make them understand why he had asked to live among them. Long they suspect-

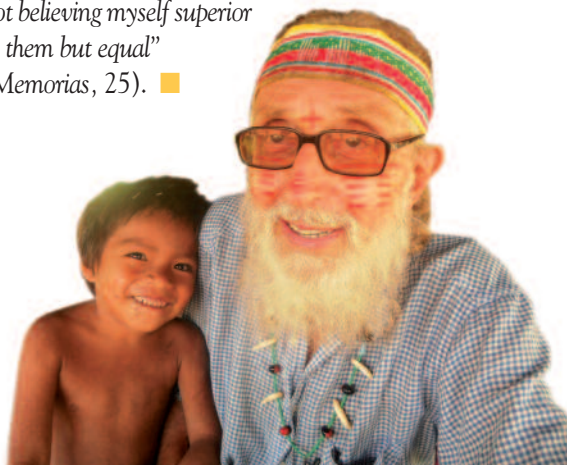


ed that he must have some hidden purpose: the few contacts they had with the whites convinced them that the whites were always intent upon deceiving them, to exploit them. Especially they were intrigued by one who lived among them without a woman and they

asked him where he had left his wife or if he wanted to get one from among them.

But in the end they convinced themselves that he could not have pretended for decades and saw that what he said was true: he was there solely because he loved them and wanted to make them understand that God loved them even more than him and wanted them to stop killing among themselves and live in peace. They were touched by his exclamation: "*They finally understood that I came to stay*" (*Memorias*, 334).

Obviously enthusiasm is not enough to erase difficulties and, much less, to clarify the course to be followed. Yankuam` clearly describes what he experienced after obtaining leave to go to the Achuar: "*I felt like leaping, falling into an ocean without the clarity of how to act.*" But, in a very clear manner, it was evident what this step meant: "*I had to die to much of what was mine, without losing my identity and place myself at their service in every possible way, living at the same level, not believing myself superior to them but equal*" (*Memorias*, 25). ■



With the Indigenous People I Discover More and More God's Call for Me

Cl. José Phan Anh Tuan, SDB - Vietnamese, missionary in the Amazon, Venezuela

My missionary religious life *ad gentes* started in a similar way to the call of God made to Samuel. With the advice of Eli, the child Samuel has recognized God's call to him: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening" (1Sam3,9). Since childhood, I recognized a particular call, but did not know who is calling me and to what I am called to. During the years of the aspirantate, the pre-novitiate, novitiate and post-novitiate, I had many opportunities to hear news about the missionary life of Salesian missionaries and I was wondering if one day I could be a Salesian missionary, too. In the novitiate, I expressed my missionary desire to the Novice Master, and then, during my three years of philosophy, I always spoke with the Rector about this desire to be a missionary *ad gentes*, and he guided me and accompanied to discern my Salesian missionary vocation.

In 2012, the Rector Major sent me to Venezuela and after 6 months of the studying Spanish, I was sent to the Amazon and there I worked for two years as a practical trainee. My life among indigenous peoples was marked by one surprise after another because of the difference in food, the language, the things of ordinary daily life, in a word, because of the cultural difference. I experienced culture shock during my first months living in the new culture, things have happened in a way that I have never imagined in my life.

Before going to the Amazon, many people have advised me not to be scared of culture



shock, but when I experienced it, it caused me a lot of stress due to difficulties in speaking, in talking, in communicating ... in the new language.

Day after day, with the help and the animation of

the Salesian confreres, with the closeness and welcome on the part of the people in the Amazon, I made the effort to deal with this shock and, above all, I re-read my diary which I wrote during the course for new missionaries in Rome in September 2011. I went through it again, reflected and shared my experiences and my reflections. These have helped me to stay calm in difficult moments. Gradually I was able to calmly deal with culture shock and clearly recognize the infinite grace of God for me; He is always with me in all situations and circumstances. I am convinced that the life of prayer and union with God are really important because they are the sources of the motivations that help us through the difficult moments of our lives.

I feel happy and satisfied as a missionary amongst the Piarora and Jiva: the indigenous peoples in the Amazon. "The Salesian missionary takes on the values of these people and share their hopes and anxieties" (Const. 30). I recognize that the culture of these people is a rich and impressive. They have been a part of my missionary life. As I journey with them I also discover more and more the call of God for me. ■

Happy to be a Missionary in the Land of the Dreams of Don Bosco

Fr. Natalino Venancio Freitas de Jesus, SDB - East Timorese Missionary in Argentina

The testimonies of the Salesian missionaries in East Timor were the roots of my missionary vocation. I thought a lot about missionary life; and after a period of discernment and dialogue with the Provincial, I expressed my desire to be a missionary in a letter sent to the Rector Major, and I was assigned to Argentina. In September 2008, I received the missionary cross in Turin and a month later came to Patagonia. I learned the language, culture and had my first experiences among the young people of the parish. It was a very beautiful experience of fraternity and apostolic life, especially with the natives of Patagonia Plateau Gangan, Trelew.

Now I am in the Salesian mission of West Pampeano. On the one hand, during the week I'm working in the morning at the hospice of Istituto San Juan Bosco, which has an enrollment of 640 students, at all levels (preschool, primary, secondary). Many of them are vulnerable due to the socio-economic reality and complex family realities that exist among the population. Then, in the afternoon I work in the day care center with vulnerable and defenseless boys and girls in Inaun Don Bosco. We provide tutoring, crafts, and an afternoon snack. These realities invite me to reflect once again on the youth

situation, especially the situation of abandonment. I feel called to offer the tenderness and mercy of God the Father to those who live in situations of abandonment.

Moreover, in the mission of the West Pampeano I work together with the confreres and the Salesian Sisters, different realities, according to the areas. The popular and rural settings are those that we give priority to in this missionary presence. On weekends, together with the SDBs and FMAs, we head to the west of the province to share moments of celebration, catechetical meetings, visits to rural areas, home visits, regular meetings with teenagers on Saturday night, radio programs. What I'm doing together with the SDB and FMA is to meet people in rural villages, home visits and sharing the Word of God in small communities.

Working with indigenous peoples, especially the Mapuches, remains a fundamental option of our ARS Province. The Salesian confreres in Patagonia continue to work with the Mapuche. This missionary work in Patagonia is the proclamation of the Good News, denouncing that which offends the dignity of the Mapuche people and land, defense of the territory, proximity to the people, respect and appreciation of the culture and self-determination of peoples, seeking along with the communities' possibilities and alternatives for a decent life.

Patagonia and the area where I'm working are still mission territories. There are a lot of simple town life and young people who need support.

I am happy being a missionary in the land of the dreams of our father Don Bosco. ■



Fostering Initial Proclamation

The main reason for which Salesians remain with Indigenous Peoples

This booklet has led us to see and appreciate the commitment of the Salesians in favor of indigenous peoples throughout our brief Salesian history.

It is a commitment that continues today with different expressions and in a variety of contexts. What we have seen are just a few examples of various initiatives in diverse contexts: protection and promotion of indigenous cultures, conscientization of their own dignity, defence of the rights of indigenous peoples, literacy programs, social initiatives, proposals for emancipation women, clinics and hospitals, vocational training for youth, schools, cooperatives, etc.

But one should never forget that all these initiatives are rich and necessary preparations to foster the Initial Proclamation of Christ among indigenous peoples. This harmony between witness and word, human promotion and evangelization is clear in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. All these initiatives will have a missionary sense to the extent that they stir up an interest that leads to a personal encounter with Christ.

"There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed!"
(Blessed Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 22).

Initial Proclamation is not the goal in itself, but the beginning which is intentionally oriented towards conversion, catechumenate, baptism, catechesis, ecclesial communion and the whole process of evangelization.

This SMD has practical consequences for the Salesians, for the Pastoral Educational Community and for the whole Salesian Family as well:

- It is an opportunity so that **all may know the value of the human and cultural riches** that God has planted among the peoples, riches which risk disappearing due to an invasive globalization.
- It is an **invitation to the whole Salesian Society to renew its commitment to ethnic minorities** as a concrete response to the invitation of Pope Francis to proclaim the Gospel *"to all peripheries, which need light of the Gospel"* (EG 20).
- It is a **stimulus and a call** to all those who are already committed to indigenous peoples to make initial proclamation and evangelization the primary intent of all initiatives and programs.
- It is a **call to young Salesians** to discern if the Lord calls them to be missionaries *ad gentes* and *ad vitam* for indigenous peoples.
- It is a challenge for all **young people and youth groups** in all Salesian settings in order to offer missionary volunteer service and launch initiatives to **raise funds for the SMD 2017 project**.
- It is an invitation to the whole **Salesian Family** to promote coordinated initiatives in view of the evangelization of **ethnic minorities**. ■



Didactic Supplements

Fr. P. Martín Lasarte, SDB

Poster – Format A2 – 7 languages

Booklet – 48 pages

Holy picture with prayer - 6 languages

Video – <http://www.missionidonbosco.tv>



Let's meet the indigenous peoples in the video of the SMD 2017!

Mapuches

The Mapuche (from the mapudungun *mapu*, 'earth' and *che* 'person', meaning, *people of the land*, *native*) or **araucanos**, are an indigenous ethnic group living mainly in southern Chile and as a minority in Argentina. Generically they embrace all groups who speak or spoke the Mapuche or mapudungun language and, in particular, referring to those of the historical region of Arauco (called Araucanos) or the current region of La Araucanía and their descendants. Upon arrival of the Spanish conquistadors in the sixteenth century, they lived between the Aconcagua Valley and the center of the island of Chiloé, in present a Chilean territory. Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries saw the Araucanization by the araucanos expanding from Chile to the east of the Andes, invading, violently in some cases and peaceful in others, in a process that meant the acculturation of the tehuelches and other pampas peoples. In the late nineteenth century, the Argentine and Chilean states actually occupied territories inhabited by the various Mapuche groups through military operations called the "Conquest of the Desert" and "Pacification of Araucanía", respectively. In Chile approximately 700,000 people declared themselves Mapuches, being 4% of the total population, accounting for 87.3% of the total indigenous population. In Argentina the Mapuche are the largest indigenous group, approximately 210,000 people.



The Mapuche speaking indigenous group are gathered in **different groups** according to the territory they occupy and certain cultural differences arising from these: *paunches*, *promaucaes*, *mapochoes*, *Maules*, *geese*, *moluches*, *huilliches*, *pehuenches*, *pehuén*, *lafquenches*.

Their **culture** is based on oral tradition. Its organization and social structure is based mainly on the family and the relationship between them, the family consisting of father, his woman (women) and his children. Groups of families related to a common ancestor are called the "*lof*".

The **Mapuche religion** is generally based on its relation a the spiritual world with the tangible world. Its main aspects are respect for the spiritual world; the cult of spirits and mythical ancestors, the cult of nature spirits; and the interrelation of the Mapuche people with "Mother Earth".

Mixes or Ayuukjä'äy

The Mixe or Ayuukjä'äy (the A-word, yuuk-flowery and yä'äy-people, meaning, *people with a flowery language*) live in central / northeast of the state of Oaxaca, mainly in the Sierra Norte region of Mexico.

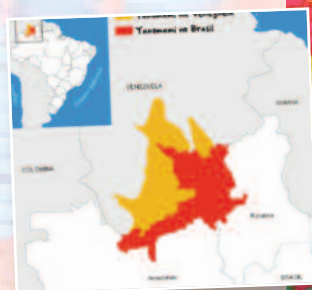
And the Mixe mountainous region is known as “Sierra Mixe”. Mixe speakers in Oaxaca are estimated at just over 110,000 people. During the conquest of Mexico, the Mixe, due to their location in the mountains, could never be conquered militarily. Contact with the Spanish came through evangelization. Their territory consists of three distinct regions: the high, 1,500 meters above sea level, near the Zempoaltepetl, which is the state’s highest elevation point with cold weather; the middle region, with elevations ranging from 800 to 1,500 meters above sea level, with a temperate climate; and the lower region, below 800 meters and a warm rainy weather.

The Summer Institute of Linguistics has identified six dialectal variants of the Mixe language. The Mixe live mainly from subsistence farming, and planting corn, beans, coffee, squash and potatoes, complemented by hunting and fishing in small rivers and streams. They are well known in Oaxaca for their great music bands - each Mixe town has a band that plays at local festivals. In some cities, the traditional weaving is still practiced on backstrap looms, and also ceramics.



The Yanomami People

The **Yanomamo** or **Yanomami** are an indigenous ethnic group divided into three groups with similar languages: sanum á, yanomam and yanam. Salesian missionaries gave the name Yanomami, which means “human being”. They live mainly in the Amazon state (Venezuela) as well as in the Brazilian states of Amazonas and Roraima occupying an area of 192,000 square kilometers of rainforest. The Yanomami are estimated to be about 32,000.



They live in small villages, between 40 or 50 people, which are built in fully open circle. Their dwellings are conical in shape and live in families and community groups. The situation of the huts can vary and, in many cases, instead of forming a circle form a row. Families share with other families in the community foods obtained from hunting, fishing or harvesting. The fire is in the center of shabono where they eat, talk, make their tools, explain their stories, myths, legends and teach children their traditions. The men engage in hunting, while women in agriculture. The communities are governed by consensus.

Social life is organized around traditional tribal principles: kinship, descendants of ancestors, intermarriage between families or groups with a common kinship and the transitional authority of chieftains.

While there are laws and reserves defending the Yanomami people, they are continuous threats “garimpeiros” and others outside the ethnic group interested in exploiting the holdings of natural resources. In 2004, the Brazilian Yanomamis founded the Hutukara association (meaning “part of the sky from which the earth was born”) to defend their rights. In 2011, Venezuelan Yanomamis also created their own association, the Horonami.

Questions for Discussion about the Video

- 1) What do you know about the indigenous peoples of Latin America?
- 2) What values do these peoples teach us?
- 3) What were the principal threats to these peoples?
- 4) How can we reconcile these millennial cultures with the proclamation of Jesus Christ?



SMD Project 2017

Salesian Intercultural Technical Training Center-Yankuam Jintia (Amazon jungle of Peru Loreto Region)

Pablo is from the Kandozi tribe living in the Amazon jungle of Peru, in the region of Loreto. He found it very difficult to insert himself in the society that surrounds him, because in his village there is no real school to prepare him for work. He knows that if he does not study he will never get a good job. The young Kandozi had a lot of distrust and difficulty in integrating with the Achuar, Quechua and mestizos who are near his community.

The Salesians began a training center in Kandozi "San Fernando" with the aim of helping young men like him. Pablo today is in elementary school, learning carpentry and animal husbandry. At the boarding school he learns to value local cultures and interact critically within models of global culture. Our young man is being trained and feels safer among young people of different tribes, sharing and coexisting peacefully with them. Pablo looks to the future with optimism, preparing for a decent job and soon to insert himself constructively into a multicultural society.

You can help Pablo and 130 other indigenous adolescents of the Amazons of America. You can help them learn a trade. You can give them the pleasure of living in harmony and of being better people.

Send your help to your provincial office or to:

ACCOUNT: **CONGREGACION SALESIANA DEL PERU**

ACCOUNT NO: 0011-0167-0200106066

ADDRESS OF BANK:

BBVA BANCO CONTINENTAL

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Coplas del Yaraví

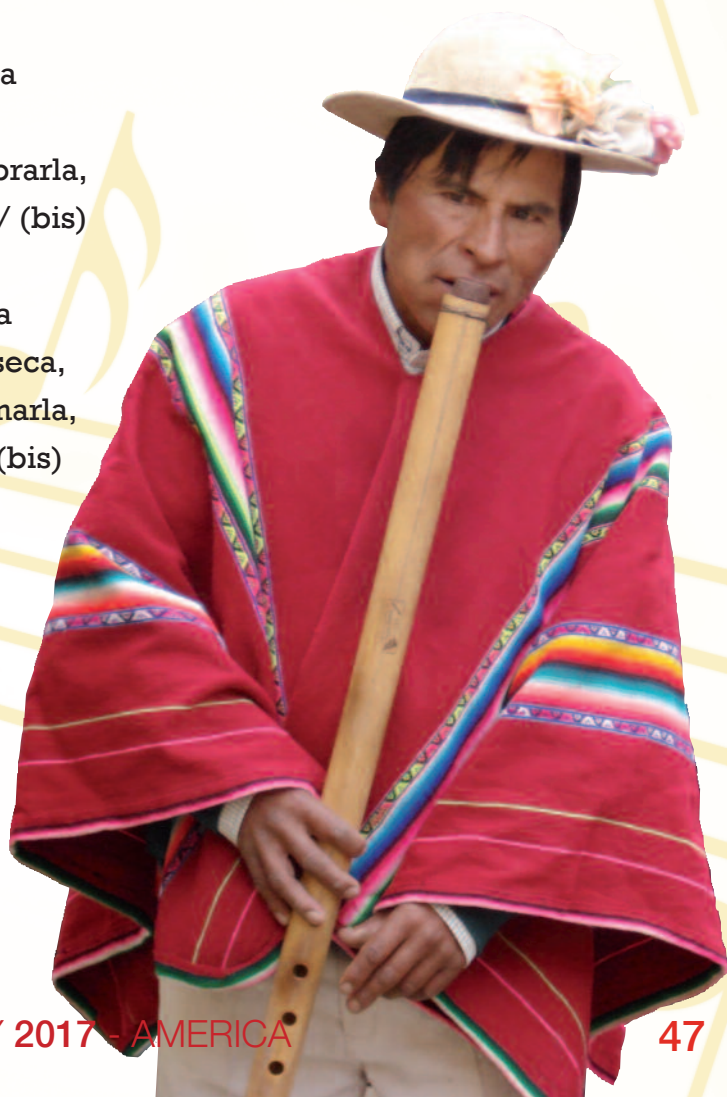
www.youtube.com/watch?v=gE8Gfr1k2A4

Señor que nuestra vida sea
como una quena simple y recta,
/para que Tú puedas llenarla;
llenarla con tu música./ (bis)

Señor que nuestra vida sea
arcilla blanda entre tus manos,
/para que tu puedas formarla,
formarla a tu manera./ (bis)

Señor, que nuestra vida sea
semilla suelta por el aire,
/para que Tú puedas sembrarla,
sembrarla donde quieras./ (bis)

Señor que nuestra vida sea
leñita humilde y siempre seca,
/para que Tú puedas quemarla,
quemarla para el pobre./ (bis)





Prayer

Father Creator, we praise you,

For the seeds of sanctity and beauty,
sown among the American peoples.

Grant us to contemplate, appreciate and defend
your wisdom in the indigenous cultures.

Help us to proclaim with the light of the Spirit
the unfathomable riches of your Son, Jesus Christ
that transfigures and fully fills every culture.

Lord Jesus, we praise and thank you

because you have made each one of us,
really sharing our lives,
loving us until the end,
so that we may have Life in all its fullness.

Help us to welcome and give life
on behalf of all our brothers and sisters.

Send us your sanctifying Spirit,

raise up in this continent missionaries,
witnesses of your love and of your resurrection,
proclaimers of your fraternity and truth,
prophets of your justice and unity.
Lord, you who are One in diversity
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
help our peoples to live
with respect for diversity,
united in the same charity. *Amen*



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