



SOCIETÀ DI SAN FRANCESCO DI SALES

CASA GENERALIZIA SALESIANA

Via della Pisana 1111 – 00163 Roma

*Il Rettor Maggiore*

Prot. 16/0479  
Roma, 08 December 2016

## MISSIONARY APPEAL OF THE RECTOR MAJOR TO THE SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO

Dear Confrères,

I am writing this letter today, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016, on the 175<sup>th</sup> year since the commencement of the Salesian Oratory, when, as Don Bosco himself tells us, he recited that *Hail Mary* with Bartolomeo Garelli. I do it with a precise intention. This is a favourable day to launch a missionary appeal “*ad gentes*” to all the Provinces of the world and to all those confrères who feel called by the Lord to live their Salesian vocation in this particular form: being available to be Salesian missionaries “*ad gentes, ad exteros, ad vitam*” (“to the peoples”, “abroad”, “for life”). My appeal is a voice that must resound in all the Provinces and Salesian presences in the world in order to favour generous responses.

The fundamental reason for this appeal is threefold:

- The **Evangelizing mission** in the world requires from us, Salesians of Don Bosco, that we go beyond, that we open up even more to give a response to so many requests that continually come to us from the Church, for a mission of evangelization in diverse places and among many peoples.
- There are some presences of the Congregation we can no longer sustain because in some nations of the five continents **there are no Salesians** who can offer their service, whereas in other places the apostolic strengths are more numerous. I think in particular of the youth that are waiting for us in the context of Project Europe, in the Middle East, in countries with a Muslim majority, in the islands of Oceania, in South Sudan, in Mongolia, in Siberia, Cambodia and Malaysia, as well as among the young migrants of the American continent... and in many other places!
- The third motivation is intimately linked to the missionary passion of Don Bosco. After the great missionary challenge of Argentina, in 1875, to arrive, in due time, in Patagonia, it was – as some of his successors stated – as if he lived only for that project. Fr. Albera writes: “Missions were always the heart of his heart and it was as if he lived only for them... He spoke about them with such an enthusiasm, that we were amazed and strongly edified by his inflamed love for souls”<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> ALBERA, P. *Circular Letters*, 134.





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Don Bosco himself, in the note he sent in 1880 to Pope Leo XIII, explicitly says: “Foreign missions were always a subject cherished by the Salesian Congregation”<sup>2</sup>.

On the occasion of the journeys I made in these years and that allowed me to visit 44 Provinces, I often said that we have to reflect on this fact: if Don Bosco had decided to limit the field of the pastoral educative activity of the Salesians only to the needy youth of Italy – which would have been a legitimate priority, considering that Italy was very much in need of his Salesians – and if he had not had the great passion and the great missionary vision that spurred him at every moment, today the Salesian Congregation would be a small congregation, limited to one nation. It was the missionary spur of our Father that made the Congregation universal in the Church and in the world.

Dear Confrères, for the above reasons, I now address to you this strong appeal and invite you all to generosity. First of all I ask the generosity of those confrères who hear this explicit call from the Lord. Then I ask the generosity of the Provinces, Rectors and, in particular, of Provincials, that they do not stifle in any way the missionary unrest of young confrères and of no other confrère, confining their view and their interest only to their own Province. We cannot forget our origins and our charismatic identity.

You know well how we proceed in these cases. As soon as the Rector Major receives a call, a letter or an email from a confrère who expresses this wish, the Dicastery for the Missions begins a serene, serious and profound discernment with the Confrère and with his Provincial. Everything is then brought to the knowledge of the Rector Major. Discernment often highlights the suitability of the candidate; but sometimes it is not so. In any case, we only look for the good of the persons and of the mission.

This is my appeal, my dear Confrères.

I invite you to pray for this intention in the entire Congregation. Many are the persons who have not yet been reached by the announcement of the Gospel. Many young people need a friend, a brother, a father whom they will be able to find in the Salesians they will meet.

May Mary Help of Christians bless this generosity of yours and may Don Bosco continue to accompany us in our commitment to being true missionary disciples of Jesus.

Yours affectionately

  
*Angel Fernández A.*  
**P. Ángel Fernández A., SDB**  
Rector Major

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<sup>2</sup> MB XIV, 624.