

CAGLIERO<sup>11</sup>

Newsletter for Salesian Missionary Animation

A Publication of the Mission Department for the Salesian Communities and Friends of the Salesian Mission

## A "Muslim Salesian"



Dear Salesians and friends of the Salesian Mission,

This month of August 2012, a group of SDB and FMA will gather together in the Salesianum, Rome for the Third Study Days on the Salesian presence among the Muslims. The first meeting of this kind was a seminar in Cairo (Egypt, 1988) and the second meeting was in Rome (2001). We want to reflect together on the meaning, possibilities, and challenges based on our experiences in many countries of the world where we are in daily contact with our Muslim brothers and sisters in the school, oratory, church or social work.

We have already many Salesians from Indonesia, Pakistan and several African countries that come from Muslim cultures, some even come from mixed Muslim - Catholic families. Even the Salesians of Europe are called to learn more about the Islamic religion and culture for balanced and wise approach in educa-

tion. Among our many past pupils there many who are proud to be Muslim and Salesian thanks to the Preventive System of Don Bosco. Prof. Francesco Zannini writes in the *Mondo e Missione*: "I still remember the words of a certain Hamdi, an Egyptian, who called himself a 'Muslim Salesian'. He was proud to be a student of the Salesian Institute in Cairo where, beside receiving an education, he had lived with other Christian students, and where his Islamic faith had been enriched by the contribution their Christian friends and teachers". (<http://www.missionline.org/index.php?l=it&art=4597>). Inter-religious dialogue between Christians and Muslims is one of the most important signs of our times. There are many resources available to all to know not only the 5 pillars of Islam, but also the different traditions and customs that help young people understand the other religion, like this website in eight languages (<http://tinyurl.com/cajy4le>).

An event that brings together some Salesians is an invitation to all of us to grow every day in the style of life that is called 'dialogue': It removes prejudices, deepens the reasons for the faith and journeys together in charity and truth.

I hope that the wealth of material that will be shared during the Study Days in Rome would become an impulse for all the confreres in Africa, Asia and Europe who, though they are close to Islamic reality every day, yet have no deep knowledge of its dynamics!

*Václav Klement*  
Fr. Václav Klement, SDB  
Councillor for the Missions

**In the course of history force has also been used in the name of the Christian faith.**

“The religious delegates who were assembled in Assisi in 1986 wanted to say, and we now repeat it emphatically and firmly: this is not the true nature of religion. It is the antithesis of religion and contributes to its destruction. In response, an objection is raised: how do you know what the true nature of religion is? Does your assertion not derive from the fact that your religion has become a spent force? Others in their turn will object: is there such a thing as a common nature of religion that finds expression in all religions and is therefore applicable to them all? We must ask ourselves these questions, if we wish to argue realistically and credibly against religiously motivated violence. Herein lies a fundamental task for interreligious dialogue - an exercise which is to receive renewed emphasis through this meeting. As a Christian I want to say at this point: yes, it is true, in the course of history, force has also been used in the name of the Christian faith. We acknowledge it with great shame. But it is utterly clear that this was an abuse of the Christian faith, one that evidently contradicts its true nature. .”

Benedict XVI, Assisi October 27, 2011

## ***A Buddhist, I became a Christian, a Salesian and a Missionary!***



I belonged to a Buddhist family but some of my sister's friends were Catholics so she joined them in some church activities. One day, my sister expressed her desire to become Catholic. It was then that my father told the whole family that before dying, our grandfather told my father that he was told that our forefathers were Catholics and he asked my father to look for our Catholic relatives. He not only permitted my sister, he surprisingly added: "I want our whole family to become Catholic according to the wish of Grandpa."

The nearest church to our house was run by the Salesians and my sister came to know Fr. Fabian Hao. She shared the story and the desire of my father to Fr. Hao who offered to help. A couple of months later, Fr. Hao told my father that he had gone to our grandfather's birthplace and he found our Catholics relatives there and one even became a priest. With that news, my father decided that our whole family would convert back to Catholicism. Our whole family supported my father's decision except me. They all started to study the catechism without me. I resisted but with the help of Fr. Hao I eventually decided to join my family. On December 22, 1992 Fr. Hao baptised our whole family.

A month later my father was diagnosed to be with cancer. The death of my father, a few months later, hit me hard but I was even more overwhelmed by the support given by Fr. Hao to my father during his illness and to our family after he passed away. I finally asked my sister to take me to Fr. Hao. I told him that I do not know what consecrated life is all about but I just want to be like him. So I became an aspirant while working to support my family. After reading the biographies of Don Bosco, Bl. Artemide Zatti and Simon Sruji I became more determined to be a Salesian brother.

One day, while cleaning an old bookshelf in the prenoviciate, I saw a book narrating how missionaries in Vietnam suffered and died during persecution for the sake of Christ. This was the seed of my missionary vocation. I shared this desire to be a missionary *ad gentes* with my novice master and rector in the post-noviciate. In 2000 I applied and I was sent to Papua New Guinea to study in Don Bosco Technological Institute in preparation for my mission in Mongolia.

When confreres ask me why I want to be a missionary abroad while we have a lot of people in Vietnam who do not know Christ. I simply respond: "We have received so much from other missionaries even at the cost of their lives. I just feel that we also have duty to share our faith in Christ". I am sure God will bless us abundantly for our generosity. He will send more people to take my place in the Province.

Since 2004 I have been happily working in Mongolia as a missionary Salesian brother. Thanks to the Salesians, witness of life which touched my stubborn Buddhist heart and led me to Christ and my Salesian vocation. Above all, thanks to God for the marvellous things he has done for me!

**Br. Andrew Tran Le Phuong**  
*vietnamese, missionary in Mongolia*



### **Salesian Missionary Intention**

#### **Salesians Working in Islamic contexts, especially in Indonesia**

That the Salesians immersed in Islamic context, especially those of the young Delegation of Indonesia may discern the possibilities of the mission of witness.

*At the beginning of August Salesians immersed in Islamic areas of the Middle East and the Gulf, Europe, Africa, Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, South and East Asia will gather. Let us pray that all the Salesian communities immersed in Islamic culture and religion, may discern the possibilities of the mission of witness and patient educational commitment. In a special way we pray for the young Delegation of Indonesia that was created in 2010 which is composed by 5 communities and 60 confreres many of whom are young and almost all of Indonesian origin.*

