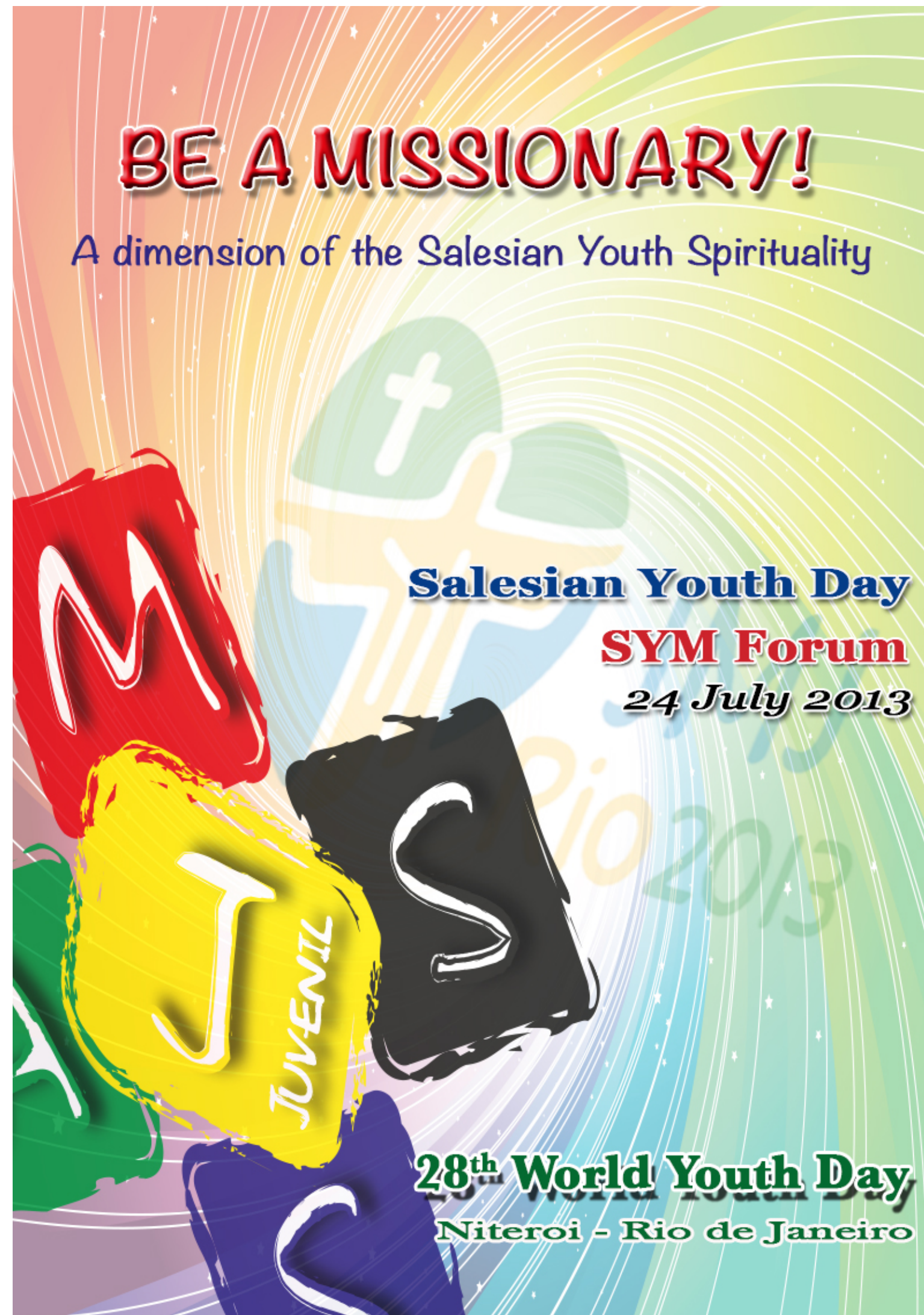


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INTRODUCTION

As Jesus traveled the roads of Samaria to reach Galilee, he found people who willingly accepted with open hearts, his invitation to be involved in bringing God's salvation to all. It happens to us too that in our journey of life we are tired and thirsting for the Good News and God's mercy. Nevertheless we experience in the inner most of our hearts God's invitation to become genuinely a neighbor to those who are wounded and thirst for Him (*cf. Jn 4, 5-42 and Lk 10, 29-37*).

Jesus, himself the source of God's salvation, with simplicity asks the Samaritan woman, "give me to drink" (*Jn 4,7*). This gesture is an inspiration and a guide to us when we wonder what must we do today to bring the abundance of life, which is God's gift, to all those in need and in search of meaning and hope.

**Missionary
commitment
is an essential
dimension of
faith.**

**We cannot be
true believers
if we do not
evangelize.**

Pope Benedict XVI

The church, in its continued mission of evangelization, counts on us young people, as the first missionaries among our peers. What does it mean to be a missionary? It means first of all to be disciples of Jesus Christ, constantly fixing our gaze on him and accepting his invitation to follow him and announce his good news. We want to be young pilgrims who proclaim God's love to other young

people, with whom we journey in life.

To proclaim the message of Jesus Christ as he lived it, demands from us a life filled with words and actions motivated by love, compassion and understanding to support each other in the search for truth and meaning of life.

With the missionary heart of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, let us look at the daily realities with the eyes of God, the giver of life and source

the young in this new culture of communication, using media wisely and carefully yet at the same time not to substitute direct encounters and dialogues with mere virtual contacts.

Our societies are becoming increasingly multi-cultural and multi-religious. Despite the sweeping youth mobility, meeting of cultures and diversity in exchange there exists hostility and aversion to human and social differences. We are a generation who, for various reasons, constantly move in search of new horizons of expression or places to live in a most dignified way. We have great possibilities to travel, meet and exchange our talents; but also come across vast presence of injustice, impoverishment and confusion. We are called to be witnesses to our faith without fear, amidst these complex realities. To communicate the joy of encountering Christ is always a precious gift. By freely offering the same to all those whom we meet, we enhance life and let hope grow. We build a new humanity.

FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. *What does this reflection on the missionary dimension of the SYM offer for the further growth of our groups?*
2. *What opportunities are offered by the existing social context so that we can be young missionaries today?*
3. *What are the challenges that we face in our everyday life, in being authentic young missionaries?*
4. *Having gone through these pages and from your personal experience of being young missionaries, what reflections and/or good practices that you would like to share with others, in order to enhance our Salesian Youth Spirituality?*

personal identity, the relationship with others (adults, peers, etc) and with God. Youth is not a waiting room! It is an open and concrete field, a fruitful laboratory of life where we discover our life mission. Our specific contribution in the Church is to joyfully live the faith, enthusiastically proclaim the good news and creatively celebrate it, especially against the odds of living the faith as a routine, rigid and outdated.

Everyday life is also our meeting place with other young people – friends, classmates, colleagues at work, those who share the same environments, friends on social networks and young who are struggling in life because of

various personal and social situations, with whom it is often difficult to talk to and establish contact. It's in this atmosphere of daily contact we can share with everyone, the deeper meaning of life. Jesus' conversation with a lawyer, following the parable of the Good Samaritan (*Lk 10,25-37*), reminds us that we build our lives if we choose to "go out" of ourselves, reach to other persons and in that act of love, encounter God.

At this juncture there are two realities through which we can share in a distinct way the beauty of our life rooted in Jesus; the digital world and human mobility. These are the areas in which we the young are deeply immersed and voluntarily interact with each other. These are also the spaces that indicate our future where we could be missionaries.

We are called to be present in the "digital world" as harbingers of the good news, sharing the experience of faith and communicating the Gospels through the "online meetings" with so many young people of other cultures and religions. The challenge is to be present as a leaven among

of hope. The Holy Spirit leads us to new friendships, to move out from our individual selves and discover new horizons and ways of meeting with many other young people in the places where they live, especially in situations that are in need of life, justice, peace, respect and dignity for human persons.

The youth are willing to collaborate in building a missionary Church, where the young people have a privileged place in celebration, in presence and in proclamation. As SYM, we want to proclaim the values of the gospel through our life of witness, using our youthful language, symbols and expressions! The educational charity of the good shepherd inspires us to bring god's love to the least, the poor and the impoverished, the excluded, those far and away, and also to those who have strayed away. We want to be disciples, who share and proclaim to the world, the joy of salvation and the new life that the God our Father entrusts to us.

1. FRIENDS OF JESUS

Those whom he invited, Jesus addressed as "Friends". It was this invitation to experience friendship with him and his Father that drew everyone and all to him; starting with the disciples of John the Baptist who came to see but stayed, the ordinary folks of Palestine (*cf. Jn 1,39*), even some of the Pharisees (*cf. Jn 2*), the stranger woman at the well (*cf. Jn 4*) and many others. The approach of Jesus to his fellow men, in his historical context, was very simple yet surprising and novel.

At the age of nine, Johnny Bosco had a dream which was a turning point in his life. That dream

Our specific contribution in the Church is to Joyfully Live the Faith, Enthusiastically Proclaim the Good News & Creatively Celebrate it

Christian faith is not only a matter of believing that certain things are true, but above all a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
Pope Benedict XVI

accosted him to nurture a special relationship with Jesus Christ – a friendship. As we read in the lives of Dominic Savio, Michael Magone and Francesco Besucco, DB recommended to his youth the same friendly relationship with Christ. Also for Maria Mazzarello, thanks to her relationship with her father and the guidance of her confessor Fr. Pestarino, Jesus was a person with whom she dialogued and shared the most intimate secrets of her heart. In her letters we see the simplicity with which she turned to Jesus and encourages her sisters and young girls to do to same.

Friendship is a language and a relationship that is very precise and particular to the world of the young. It is a distinctive characteristic of the Salesian Spirituality. For us “the education is a matter of the heart”. This relationship, “friendship” was strongly present at Valdocco and Mornese – our first communities. It was a relationship of proximity and union of hearts, of ideals and commitments. So should our friendship with Christ be. We need to dedicate time and nurture it through ordinary and special moments of encounters with Him. This friendship transforms and unities our hearts with the heart of Jesus and thus makes his mission as our own.

The church always presents “Encountering Christ” as the purpose of our spirituality and sacraments. Pope benedict XVI says, “Christian faith is not only a matter of believing that certain things are true, but above all a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is an encounter with the Son of God that gives new energy to the whole of our existence. When we enter into a personal relationship with him, Christ reveals our true identity and, in friendship with him, our life grows towards complete fulfillment”.

4. LIVING THE DAILY LIFE WITH JOY AND COMMITMENT

The light of faith makes us realize that “Life” is invaluable, because it is the fruit of God's love. The encounter with Jesus Christ and having found in him the rock on which to build our existence can only lead us to a permanent joy. Don Bosco had accepted this truth and expressed it in a simple way: "Holiness consists in being happy."

We recognize that it is in everyday life that we encounter God and ought to live it joyfully. The Lord, whom we follow and who is present with us, is very special and unique does not mean absence of hardships and difficulties. He accepted the cross for the love of us and teaches us to love and serve. We too, willingly accept the cross in our daily life when we live the various moments of life with commitment, creativity and responsibility, despite routines and repetitions. Great and extraordinary things do not happen every day and it is precisely for this reason that we live in response to God through our daily fidelity. To live well each day is a great challenge for all of us.

This requires a certain discipline to overcome the daily temptations of doing only what we want. Belonging to a group that lives the Salesian Youth Spirituality, is for us a real support to live our daily life with joy and responsibility. It gives us courage to become yeast that enlivens the lives of others – children, adolescents and young people.

We often hear that young people are the future of the society: we consider this statement inaccurate; because it seems that we do not acknowledge the value of each stage of life. Each stage of human maturity has value in itself and for us youth is "our" present moment, in which we discover our

**A new generation
of Christians
is being called
to help build a world
in which
God's gift of life
is welcomed,
respected & Cherished –
not rejected.**
Pope Benedict XVI

the challenges and the opportunities, the hopes and joys, but never getting tired of doing our best to improve the world because we believe in God and in our fellow human beings. We look at people with great faith and hope because they are the living image of God, who are always becoming anew. Our great gift to the world is our realization, as inspired by Jesus that we are the children of a loving Father, who wants life and hope for all.

Another concrete action that we are chosen to do is to create welcoming communities in which everyone, especially those who are marginalized and excluded, feels at home. This relational dimension is decisive for everyone. Unfortunately, some cultural and social changes that rock the human society makes our relationships seem superficial and functional. It is often the young who are involuntary and helpless victims of such phenomena. It is the experience of our group and community living that enables us to satiate our need to relate and learn to build deeper relationships that are inclusive, gratuitous and according to the gospels.

We express the passion for humanity and creation through active and critical participation that fosters social transformation in favour of peace, justice, truth, freedom and culture of love. Building the Kingdom of God today means, a personal commitment to ensure the development of a culture of life in our educational settings, ecclesial communities, social networks and in every walk of life. Thus enriching these places and spaces with the style and specific values of the Salesian charism. For example, commitment to preventive system in our formal and non-formal education, liturgical-catechetical animation, promotion of culture and healthy recreations like sports, music, theater, etc., the social and political commitment for common good, volunteering as educators and missionaries where we witness fraternity and enhance the culture of gratitude.

More than ever, now the youth need the friendship of Christ to face the challenges of their daily life. Such a friendship adds meaning to our lives and illumines our paths in moments of difficulty and darkness. In the company of a friend like Jesus often our eyes can be opened to see the truth and hearts set on fire to withstand the difficulties and despair. Jesus would offer us a new perspective of life filled with hope and meaning, as it happened to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (*cf. Lk 24,13*).

This friendship with Jesus will be the foundation of our courage and ignite us to bear witness to faith wherever we are, even when met with rejection and indifference. It is impossible to encounter Christ if we refuse to make him known to others. As true missionaries we cannot keep Christ to ourselves! We share with others the beauty of encountering him and the joy of our friendship with Him.

2. THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

It is not easy to live our faith in Christ by ourselves. Having faith is to lean on our brothers and sisters who, through out history, have witnessed the Christian faith and make our own faith a solid rock of support to many others. It was from this communion of friendship with each other that the first Christians drew strength and energy to live the friendship they had built with Christ, in a context that was very unfavourable and often times hostile.

“That they may be one as we are” (*Jn 17,22*) – prayed Jesus before his suffering and death. “Go and make disciples of all people” (*Mt 28.19*) – his

**Anyone
who has discovered
Christ
must lead
others to him.
A great joy
cannot be
kept to oneself.
It has to be
passed on**

Pope Benedict XVI

parting words before his ascension into heaven. These – Communion and Commission – were the plea and the command that Christ left with us as a legacy, for each one of his friends to live with.

We often hear the expression: "Yes to Jesus, No to the Church." In reality it is an oxymoron. Christ himself refers to the Church as "His". It is impossible to separate Christ from the Church, as it is, to separate the head from the body (*cf. 1Cor 12:12*). The Church is not simply a human institution like any other, but is closely united to God, willed and founded by Jesus. We cannot follow Jesus alone. He who yields to the temptation to go on his own or to live the faith according to individualistic mentality (that dominates today's society), runs the risk of never meeting Jesus Christ or ending up following a false image of Him.

Growing in friendship with Christ necessarily means recognizing the importance of joyful participation in the life of one's parish, community and movements, as well as in the celebration of Sunday Mass, frequent reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation, and cultivation of personal prayer and meditation on God's word.

As Mary the Mother of God, was present with the Apostles at the beginning of the Church, she has also guided the Salesian Family from its origin. Don Bosco used to say, "She did it all." The origin of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (*FMA*) is also rooted in Mary's words heard by young Maria Domenica Mazzarello along the Borgoalto, "I entrust them to you." In Mary, Don Bosco has given us a sure guide to fulfill our educational mission. As a family is held together and supported by the mother, Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, supports the Salesian Family and all our educational and evangelizing endeavours.

**We cannot have
God as our Father
if we do not hold
the Church as our
Mother**
St. Cyprian

3. BUILDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The novelty of Jesus' message is, "God loves everyone". God does not make an exclusive choice of a group of people, a social class, a continent or an ethnic group: He is the Father of all, and therefore wants the happiness of all. If at all, He has any preference, it is always for the poor, the helpless, the miserable, the voiceless and the forgotten.

The Friends of Jesus earnestly continue his mission to proclaim to everyone that God is and everyone. The Father who "so loved gave his only Son, in him shall not eternal life" (*Jn 3,16*), to have life in its God is fully accepted, life.

What is fullness of triumphs over death. to the precepts of the there are conditions prevent its full death. The friends of Jesus collaborate with Him, so that "all may have life and have it abundantly" (*Jn 10,10*). How can we do this?

Our first act of love as friends of Jesus is to share the source of our hope. Our hope has a name – Jesus Christ. We the young people are the most effective communicators and transmitters of our personal experience of Jesus to our own peers. The paschal mystery (the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus) reveals the ultimate triumph of God over evil. Let us look at the world with realism, recognizing in it the good and the bad,

**Dear Young people,
the Lord is asking you to
be prophets
of this new age,
messengers of his love
drawing people
to the Father and
building a future of
hope for all humanity.
The world needs this
renewal!**
Pope Benedict XVI

on the side of each God of Jesus is the the world that he that whoever believes perish but have God wants everyone fullness. And when there is fullness of life? It is the life that It is to live according God of life. Where that threaten life or realization, there is