Dear brothers and friends of the Salesian missions!

Cordial greetings to all, a few days from the start of the 27th General Chapter! For different Provinces the feast of our holy missionaries and protomartyrs Luigi Versiglia and Calixtus Caravario means the period when the Salesian Mission Day is celebrated, while for all of us, it is a way to express our gratitude for their lives offered totally to God.

Reflecting on the past six-year period 2008-2014 I thank the Lord especially for having given rise to numerous missionary vocations in the Congregation and the Salesian Family. Through the six missionary expeditions (2008-2013) the Rector Major sent a total of 206 confreres. Most of them are from Asia (127), from Europe (43), from Africa (22), and from America (14). The most generous countries are: Vietnam (67), India (40) Italy (10), Poland (9), Spain (8), Slovakia (8), Indonesia (7) and the Philippines (5). By now all the regions send and receive missionaries. The missionary movement is multidirectional making the Congregation truly Catholic - universal. Moreover, after more than 40 years, the Congregation re-established the experience of missionary aspirantes in the South Asia region (2011 and 2012). We expect the first missionary send off in 2018, when the first candidates will finish their post-novitiate. Thank you to all!

I ask you to pray that the GC 27 may give a new impetus to strengthen the vocation and missionary culture in our Congregation!

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That young people educated through Don Bosco’s Preventive System may know how to grow up with a critical spirit, and may be nurtured by their elders’ human and religious virtues.

An African proverb says: “An old man sitting down can see further than a young man standing up”. The temptation young people have to get along without their elders (parents, catechists, superiors, etc.) is always a strong one. “In Africa, the elderly are held in particular veneration. They are not banished from families or marginalized as in other cultures. On the contrary, they are esteemed and perfectly integrated within their families, of which they are indeed the pinnacle. This beautiful African appreciation of old age should inspire Western societies to treat the elderly with greater dignity” (Africae Munus, 47).