Dear Friends!

The eleventh day of the month is approaching once again. We remember with vivid emotions the 11th of November 1875, prophecy of all Salesian missionary expeditions that followed it including the recent 145th Expedition last Sept. 28.

Little by little, in the Provinces and in the houses the 11th of the month is taking a missionary shape and colour. The initiatives are multiplying: Missionary Rosary, community missionary celebrations, missionary testimonies, missionary send offs of groups or individuals, and so on.

Along with the 24th of each month - Mary Help of Christians - and the last day of the month - Don Bosco - the 11th should become a “thermometer” and a “beacon”: a “thermometer” that measures the missionary “temperature” of our hearts, our houses and our projects; “Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary vigour,” Pope Francis insits (EG 109); and also a “beacon” that guides the missionary horizons of our daily educative and pastoral commitment which, in turn, helps us not to stand still.

May the missionary animators know how to seize the marvelous opportunity the 11th of every month offers, particularly this November! Thanks!

Fr. Guillermo Basañes SDB
Councillor for the missions

The seed planted on November 11, 1875 has become a vigorous tree

The Biographical Memoirs narrates the first missionary send off 139 years ago:

“Finally, November 11 dawned... the departure of a group of missionaries for South America... was an extraordinary event in the eyes of people living in the remote little corner of Turin known as Valdocco... As soon as the Magnificat was intoned, the missionaries made their appearance two by two and took their places in the middle of the sanctuary where space had been reserved for them. The priests were dressed in Spanish style and held their boat shaped hats in their hands; the coadjutors wore black suits and carried top hats... Don Bosco mounted the pulpit as Vespers ended. At the sight of him, a profound silence fell over that vast sea of people, all trembling with emotion as they eagerly drank in his every word. Every time he referred directly to the missionaries his voice became choked, the words almost dying away on his lips. He manfully restrained his tears, but his audience wept... “In doing this,” Don Bosco preached, “we are entering upon a mighty undertaking, not because we have any pretensions, or because we believe we can convert the whole world in a few days; yet who knows? This departure and this humble beginning may be the seed that will grow into a mighty tree...” (BM XI, 356-360).

Thanks to this missionary spirit, which is an essential element of the Salesian spirit, today the charism of Don Bosco is present in 132 countries! That seed planted on November 11, 1875 has really become a vigorous tree!
In the context of the great Salesian mission we are at times tempted to remain at the level of social work – eliminating illiteracy, offering quality education or offering out-of-school youth a good technical preparation, rescuing street children etc. But we can also slowly forget that we are first of all disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus’ solution was to save humankind from all evil, including material and social oppression. The best thing we can give the poor is the Gospel and the Spirit who makes us free! Even though conversion is not our direct aim, proclaiming Jesus Christ in all our words and deeds is our right, beginning with Baptism. It is important for our vocation throughout our life.

May Salesians in the South Asia Region be committed to evangelisation in all their educational or social works, and in political empowerment of all our beneficiaries.