

March 2013

Dear Confreres,

I apologise for my one-month absence from the web... from now on I will try to keep the pace of a monthly newsletter!

January ended with so many “Salesian memories”! February came, instead, with a special “Salesian missionary touch”. On the 25th of this month we celebrated the feast of Saint Luigi Versiglia and Callisto Caravario, two wonderful examples of missionary spirit to the point of martyrdom. Let us pray the Almighty God through their intercession for all the missionaries of the world and for all Chinese people, now present even in Africa (see Fr. Basanes article)

I would like to encourage every community in the Province to think about the possible launching of a missionary group in our pastoral activities. It is an appeal especially for the formation houses (Prenoviciate, Noviciate and Postnoviciate) giving chance to candidates to Salesian life and young confreres to verify a possible special call for being missionaries “ad gentes”. The Counsellors of Missions and Formation have issued a document about “Missionary Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco” last January (<http://www.sdb.org/en/Departments/Missions/Documents>). Fr. Cyril Odia proposes for us a brief comment on this document and a scheme to be applied in the first phases of initial formation.

Thomas from Vietnam is introducing himself to all of us. While you read his profile imagine hearing it directly from him. That means a joyful presentation full of smiles, amusement and funny facial expressions!

May God bless all of us

Bro. Paolo

A “Kairos” For Africa And Madagascar

One thing that impresses anyone who visits Africa is the number of Chinese who are present in the continent. Some estimate that there are at least **25 million Chinese in Africa**! Some of these, especially the young, come to our centres and oratories mainly for sports, and sometimes also to “enjoy” some of our liturgical celebrations. Perhaps they become, sometimes, the butt of our jokes. Yet, if we examine deeper this situation with missionary sensitivity, it becomes obviously clear that many of them, if not most of them, have not heard the Gospel nor of Jesus Christ.



It is perhaps a happy coincidence that last November 5-9, 2012 the Study Days was on the Initial Proclamation of Christ in Africa and Madagascar which took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia while this year’s Salesian Mission Day focuses on the proclamation of Christ in Africa.

These two occasions impel us to look around us with the missionary heart of Don Bosco!

With the missionary eyes of Don Bosco we see around us “the urgency of proclaiming the Good News to the millions of people in Africa who are not yet evangelised” (*Ecclesia in Africa*, 47).) It is important, therefore, to stir up an interest in Jesus Christ among those who do not know him, as well as to revitalise the faith of African Christians who have become lukewarm in their faith.

Yet, Pope Benedict XVI also invited us to «recover the ardour of the beginnings of the evangelization of the African continent” (*Africae Munus*, 164). Such missionary ardour opens our eyes to the missionary possibilities of the Chinese presence in Africa. Indeed, **here we have all the possibilities to proclaim the Gospel which the Church in China does not have!** The New Testament uses the term *kairos* to describe “the appointed time in the purpose of God”, the time when God acts (e.g. Mark 1,15). I am convinced that we have to respond to this time of God’s visitation. It is for this reason that I invited the Provincials

of the African Region during our last meeting to discern what God is telling us today before such a massive Chinese presence. I am confident that an abundant harvest awaits us if we respond with missionary audacity to this *kairos* for the Church and the Congregation in Africa & Madagascar!

Fr. Guillermo Basañes, SDB

Regional Councilor for Africa & Madagascar

MISSIONARY FORMATION OF THE SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO

The Article explores three main themes (contents, attitudes, experiences) in the different stages (translated as “moments”) of formation. These three elements have to be constantly deepened, and adapted to different contexts. The aim is to ‘keep alive the missionary zeal of Don Bosco’ a significant part of our charism and spirituality. It is expected that when this is properly done, it would facilitate the discernment process for Salesian missionaries ‘ad gentes’. In simple terms, it attempts to answer the question: ‘HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE A MISSIONARY VOCATION ‘AD GENTES’?

In the introductory letter to the document we are reminded of the renewed in-depth study of the person of St John Bosco and the specific charismatic identity the Holy Spirit gave to the Church through him. This is spread all over the world by the Salesian family through a missionary commitment started by don Bosco himself. The Rector Major has called for an ‘inculturation of the Salesian charism’ (ACG 412, Rome 2011) and this echoes one of the main task of the missionary endeavours of the Church in ‘modern world’. The idea is not new but perhaps more urgent as the signs of the times are demanding to make the Gospel of Jesus Christ not only relevant but effective in every generation. This reminds us of the concern of St Paul, the apostle to the gentiles: “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Romans 10:14). Article 6 of our Salesian Constitutions explains what the Salesian sense of mission is. It is not just being somewhere or going somewhere else but it has the following key components:



1. Service to the church and faithful to the commitments of Don Bosco
2. Evangelizers of the young with some specific mandates
 - a. Vocations,
 - b. Education to faith and culture
 - c. Particularly by means of social communication
 - d. Proclaiming the Gospel

The rest of the documents gives some guidelines on Attitudes, Contents and Experiences (ACE... you can remember with Adeyemi College of Education.. A. C. E which, by the way, is a good three-step method for analysis in youth groups and communities as well...) to be developed in the different stages of formation. I also feel this arrangement is in right order. Attitude makes you ready and open to what is happening and that makes you most prepared to get the best out of the content which in turn helps you to have a good experience and the circle continues again ... an open attitude to your experience which helps you to look critically at the content and helps you to have a more meaningful experience again...

Stage	ATTITUDE	CONTENT	EXPERIENCE
Pre novitiate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gratitude 2. interest, 3. joy, 4. desire, 5. openness, 6. sense of compassion, 7. generosity 8. simple life, 9. gift of self, 10. commitment 11. service. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Study of Don Bosco's life 2. the desire to go to the missions in his early years of priestly formation 3. his launching of the missionary frontier of the Congregation 4. a description of the current presences of the Congregation 5. the presentation of historical figures and present witnesses of Salesian life 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. know the work of missionaries in one's own Province, in the local church in one's own country and around the world, 2. be part of a missionary group in the pre-novitiate; 3. commit in catechesis and in the apostolate, 4. questions about the meaning of life in young people, creating the desire to know the figure of Jesus.
Novitiate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the sentiments of Jesus, and with his commitment, 2. love, especially for young people who do not know Jesus, 3. da mihi animas - gift of self to God in the religious profession 4. a positive attitude towards the missions and Salesian missionaries 5. interest and willingness to offer themselves to the missions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Memoirs of the Oratory-oratorian heart 2. holiness lived out by some significant figures of the Salesian Family, 3. Salesian Family - collaboration and contribution 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. insertion in the social and apostolic context 2. educational and pastoral experiences, 3. experiencing the world of the young, especially of the poorest 4. Prayer for missions- Eucharistic adoration and the Rosary; 5. interact in a friendly manner, with young people from other religions; 6. maintain contacts with some Salesian missionary, 7. be involved in the annual and monthly celebration of the Salesian Mission Day, -11th of the month

Post novitiate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. critical and compassionate openness 2. sensitivity to the needs of young migrants, street children and youth at risk; 3. interest and participation in the evangelising mission of the Church in one's own country and in the world; 4. Commitment, sacrifice and self-giving. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. critical and Christian reading of culture and events 2. the study of the history of the Congregation 3. the preventive system with attention to its inculturation 4. knowledge of the phenomenon of migration and its challenges; 5. the study of catechesis and social communication 6. knowledge of the Criteria for the Discernment of the Salesian Missionary Vocation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. apostolate among young, the poor, youth at risk 2. organise and animate missionary groups 3. missionary promotion using the means of social communication 4. reflect on the Criteria for the Discernment of the Salesian Missionary Vocation.
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Fr. Cyril Odia



First Name: HUAN [*hwaâ:n*]

Family Name: TRAN QUOC

Full Name: Thomas Aquinas TRAN QUOC HUAN

I - Family Background: I was born as the sixth of eight siblings in a traditional Catholic family. My parents are working-hard farmers yet rather devout Christians. One of my brothers is a diocesan seminarian and a sister is a religious of a local congregation.

II- Vocation History: After graduation from High School, I chose to help my parents in their farming. Yet, one year later, my seminarian brother asked me to take examination for college studies, since the seminary accept only graduates from college.

I passed the entrance examination and continued my studies. During my college, I met the Salesians through the mediation of my sister [while she was in formation house, some Salesians visited them].

After two years of attending the aspirant program offered by the Salesians, I dropped out for a while because of the pressures of my college courses and lack of interest in the program. Anyway I felt some emptiness in my

heart when I did not keep in touch with the Salesians.

In the third year of my college studies, I asked to continue the aspirant program. I joined the preparatory year for those who would enter the Pre-Novitiate. What came next was what all Salesian candidates had to pass through: Pre-novitiate, Novitiate and Post-novitiate. I have been happy all the time to be a Salesian.

III- Vocation Motivation:

During my Novitiate, many home-visit Missionaries passed by the community and shared their inspiring stories of missionary lives, hiding no challenges and difficulties. I was challenged by their witnesses and dedication and asked myself why I should not become one of them but I had still the fear to face the demands for a missionary life. I am quite aware of my limitations in intellectual capacity as well as personal weakness. I shared my concerns and anxieties to my superiors who accompanied me with delicacy and sensitiveness.

Yet, the impulse has grown up and become mature when I decided to apply formally for *ad gentes* missionary life.

I trust that God is calling me to go and share what God makes me as I am, and to receive God's love through those I will be sent to serve.

Missionary prayer intention for the month of March: America – South Cone Region, especially for the Salesians of Brazil

That the confreres of the Provinces of Brazil, who are preparing for World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, may render Salesian consecrated life more authentic, visible, credible and fruitful.