

DON BOSCO

IN THE MISSIONS TODAY



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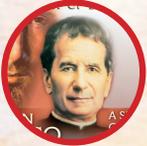
Some young adults share with us a few of the beautiful experiences they had during their Mission. This reading will help us to see the beauty of giving part of our lives to God.



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Dear Salesian Family,

It is my pleasure, in the name of the Directors of the Salesian Family Volunteer/Missioner Programs of the United States and Canada to present this special edition magazine which celebrates the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco.

YES! Don Bosco is alive. He is alive in each one of us. His mission continues among the children of the whole world. In this magazine you will find stories about people of all ages, but especially young adults, who are giving of themselves.

After you have read these articles, please share this magazine with young people whom you believe have the power to join this volunteer movement. Your collaboration is needed to continue Don Bosco's mission. I hope the stories will inspire you, as they have inspired us, to keep working to transform the lives of the young people with whom we work.

In Don Bosco, your friends,

Sr. Denise Sickinger, FMA

VIDES+East USA

Sr. Jeannine Landry, FMA

VIDES-Canada

Sr. Mary Gloria Mar, FMA

VIDES+USA

Mr. Adam Rudin

Salesian Lay Missioners

Mr. Juan Carlos Montenegro

Salesian Volunteers



Sharing from the Missionary Field



"In my final year of University I remember working on an economic report that was long and time consuming.

I had just completed the final paragraph when suddenly a power failure occurred and I had not yet saved my work. The report I had been working on for hours vanished in a split-second and there was no way to retrieve it. I was very disappointed and upset to lose such valuable information. At that

moment it made me reflect on how I would feel if I reached the end of my life and realized that my work had not

been done with the right intention; i.e., for the greater glory of God. It would be an ir-retrievable loss of time and energy. But I can prioritize by putting God first in my life, seeking to know and do His Will. Then I would fulfill my life's purpose.

In July 2014, I had the privilege to return to Brazil and serve at a Salesian Center in Linhares where I had volunteered two years prior. The Salesian Center reaches out to over 200 children each day from the ages of 5 – 16. It offers a variety of activities before and after school in an effort to keep the youths off the streets. Character development and instilling the values of Don Bosco's educative method are the prime focus here. The youths are encouraged to have respect for others as they participate in sports, martial arts, music lessons, and dance. There is also time allocated for academic growth. I taught English and Math to the students and helped them with school assignments. It is an incredible feeling to be part of the community and actively participate in their daily routine. Life in Brazil is simple, yet always full of joy and excitement. Brazilians are genuine; they love to dance, play soccer, and attend many fiestas.

On the weekends, I took the chance to spend quiet time with God. I would find a secluded area by the lake and be awed by the spectacular beauty of the sunset over the water. I experienced many instances of grace and thanked God in my heart. I am grateful for the opportunities to serve around the world and experience the inner freedom and joy that comes from the heart of service. I would encourage those who are considering mission work to pray seriously about it, as it will be not only be an eye-opening experience but also a life-changing one."

- Joseph, Brazil

"Probably the greatest lesson I learned in Africa is that happiness is not proportional to our material possessions or wealth. It is a simple lesson, one that I've already been told many times before; however, it means so much more now that I've experienced and witnessed it firsthand. While Tanzanians have hardly anything to eat and share small houses with six other families, they still smile more than any group of people I've ever met. They laugh and they make time to stop and thank God for the little they get every day. They are so grateful for everything, sharing with their family, helping their neighbors, and, most importantly, they smile at life even when life itself doesn't smile back at them."



- Roger, Tanzania

"My experience was great and so rewarding even though the reality was so crude. There were oh, so many human vices to battle directly and their victims were such young, innocent kids! Human trafficking, exploitation, rape, incest, and kids with their backs and hands all wounded who had no identity! These young people fear everything and everyone. One girl told me she was so tired of life. She was 13. How sad!



They were my motivation and reason to be there: to love them very much and work hard. Life was simple there but it was also very charming. People are very resilient; I was humbled by everybody around me."

- Monica, Benin

"They really need to know English because it is a requirement when applying for many jobs here. The girls are great and very welcoming and simple. They're eager to learn and there's never a dull moment with them. We're trying to move away from the 'How are you? I'm fine, thank you.' I never imagined myself as a teacher but I pretend I really know what I'm doing and it seems to work out okay!"



- Jennifer, Cambodia

THREE LIFE LESSONS

Grace Loeffler



It's been one year. I've had 365 days of intimate friendships, precious moments, and sweet memories. I've survived 52 weeks without a hug from

mom or a face-to-face conversation with any of my favorite people from home. For an entire year, I've worn one pair of shoes every single day and a combination of five outfits that have kept my knees and shoulders from ever meeting the South Sudanese sun. I've denied myself simple comforts in order to have my life radically transformed by a motley gang of precious, mischievous, and affectionate African children.

If I could possibly summarize a year's worth of life lessons and transforming experiences, it would be best done through the following quote:

"The most important hour is always the present. The most significant person is precisely the one sitting across from you right now. The most necessary work is always love."

- Meister Eckhart

People first. Life is comprised of so many choices. In the modern world we live in, even here in the jungles of Africa, we face the daily struggle of being consumed by a cyber-world that

can swallow hours of our time. The rule I've set for myself from the beginning of this mission is to always choose the person in front of me before anything else. If I have planning or grading to do for school, but a little one wants to play, the schoolwork can be done later so that the child can be loved now. This started out as a mental rule for mission, but I've realized that this outlook will directly translate into my life back home. I need to constantly put people first. They are what really matters.

Fear not. There's something awesome about being called a "missionary." It's like a mental superhero cape that you throw over yourself as you step onto foreign soil. There's a complete trust and surrender to God, knowing that since He's already gotten you this far, He must want to do something wonderful through you. The results were glorious – beautiful relationships, lots of little victories, and many visible graces. But here's the thing: I'm just me, just trying to love, and without any special powers to do anything different than what I've been capable of doing every day for my entire life. Back in the States, far too many times, I hesitated. I knew the right thing to do, but what would people think? What would the consequence be? Am I not too busy right now? But here this "fearless me" has tackled teaching middle school classes, fostered meaningful friend-

ships with teenagers, and gotten a delicate handle on two foreign languages. I realize that the impossible is always possible with the help of God. It doesn't matter where I am but what does matter is that God is beside me and ready to work through my weaknesses. The only effort He requires is just for me to try.

Simplicity. We need so much less to survive happily and peacefully than we can even fathom in our comfortable homes in America. I've barely missed the restaurant chains, strip malls, or ten-dollar movie tickets of my past life. I spend half my day every Saturday washing my clothes by hand. I save every scrap piece of paper, plastic, or fabric lying around in hopes of using it for a future project in school. I don't have any money, but neither does anyone else around me. I eat the same food every day. I wear the same clothes every day. I wear my hair in the same style every day. And you know what? I'm still happy. I'm happy just being me, without the fluff. What matters are the matters of the heart. I'm valued for my ability to [attempt to] dance, to draw, to bandage a wound, and to love Jesus. I'm loved because all I have to offer is Jesus, and fittingly, He is Love.

It's been a wild ride and a challenging, exciting adventure. With three remaining months, I'm hoping and praying to take in and appreciate every last second with those sweet children and loving adults who have unknowingly taught me how to view the world through different eyes.



The face of this child holding his baby brother illustrates the simple joy these children find in a life that offers them very little. Photo by Grace Loeffler



SLM Grace with a few of her loving and affectionate "students."

BICENTENARY OF DO

DON BOSCO



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BOSCO'S BIRTH 2015

BYPIA

**Bosco Young People In Action:
Five North America SDB-FMA
Missioner Organizations**

**A SIGN AND BEARER
OF GOD'S LOVE
TO THE YOUNG**



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Mission for Life

Michael Zimmerman

El Valle de Anton, Panama, Summer, 2010. There I was. As a 6'6" blond, barely-Spanish-speaking 21-year old American suburbanite, I stuck out more than a little bit during my month teaching English at the local elementary school and living in the garage of three Salesian Sisters. People had to have wondered the same thing that I too on occasion had wondered, "Why am I here?" In all honesty, I had no clue besides the fact that I wanted to do Catholic volunteer work in another country. But God can work with that – He always has a plan.

Whether we know it or not, one goes on a mission because one is sent. Every Christian's mission is a participation in Jesus' mission – as the Son sent by the Father. But what was Jesus' mission? What did He do? What did He bring us? We still have war and poverty even 2000 years after His coming. Pope Benedict XVI tells us, "The answer is very simple: God. He has brought God." But how does Jesus' mission apply to us?



Mike Zimmerman under the Cristo Rei Statue in Lisbon, Portugal

In Panama, there was a little boy in the school, about 8 years old, who just wasn't learning anything. Perhaps he had a learning disability as I'd ask him a simple question and he'd look up, smile sweetly, and give an answer that was utterly wrong - and in doing

so completely break my heart. Here's a boy living in material poverty with no way of advancing academically and there was absolutely nothing I could do about it in one short month. But I prayed about it every night and I realized that his most basic need is the same as the wealthy and talented students on my college campus back in the States – they need God, they need God's love. Love is the



Helping out at the Eucharistic Congress in Boston with two friends



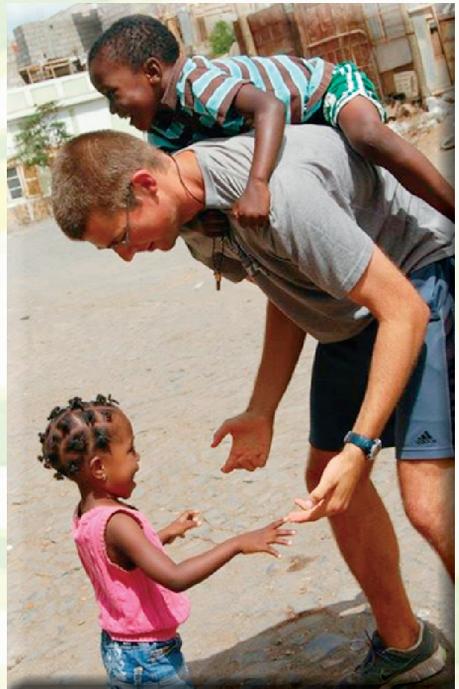
Mike with students from El Valle de Anton, Panama
greatest need in the world and it's a need so big that only God can fill it.

I'm one person; I can't change the world by eradicating hunger, illiteracy, or armed conflicts. But as a Christian, I know I have been loved by God and so I can be that love for others. There are countless unique and unrepeatable interactions that come to us every day and God has trusted us to bring His love into them. I am a member of the Church and as such I am a member of the body of Christ. I'm called to be His loving hands, His voice of love, and His pierced heart. In being sent by the Father and pouring out His love, I am transformed by that same love and I come to know ever more the Father who is sending me.

The vocation to be a saint, to let God live in us, is part of every Christian's vocation and God is calling me to that through being a priest for the Archdiocese of Boston. Currently, I'm a

seminarian in my 2nd year of theological studies at the Pontifical North American College in Rome. Through prayer and slowly learning to walk by faith, I've come to trust that God has a mission for me wherever He sends me. Although I don't know what has become of that little boy in Panama, I trust that God has a mission for him too – a mission that he will accomplish by always “bringing” God.

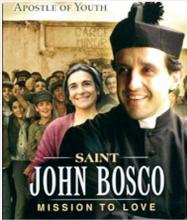
***He has showed you, O man,
what is good; and what does the
LORD require of you but to do
justice, and to love mercy, and
to walk humbly with your God?
- Micah 6:8***



Playing with two children while on a Salesian Mission trip to Cabo Verde in the City of Praia, Summer 2014.

Being a Missioner at Home

Living a Life of Service



The boys become evangelizers of their own people

Don Bosco wanted his boys in Valdocco to take responsibility for the education, the evangelization, and the atmosphere of the community. He appointed leaders, had group activities, encouraged initiatives and, in this way, made everybody contribute to the mission of the house.

[...] **This is the core of the strategy of Don Bosco:** If you want people to be converted and to follow the road indicated by the Gospel, begin with the young and the children and automatically they will bring their parents and relatives to church. The young form the basis of the Christian community, even after this community has been built up. "Gather the children," he says, "especially the most abandoned ones, and you allow the missionaries to get in touch with their savage [sic] parents through the children, so that, with the help of God, the Indios may become the evangelizers of themselves." (BM XIII, 935).

Fr. Luc Van Looy, SDB Salesian missionary spirituality III, [section 4.1]



Mother Teresa – "Stay where you are. Find your own Calcutta. Find the sick, the suffering, and the lonely right where you are — in your own homes and in your own families, in your workplaces and in your schools. Everywhere, wherever you go, you find people who are unwanted, unloved, uncared for, rejected by society, completely forgotten, completely left alone."

Tim and Micki Malone, husband and wife, taught the Ethiopians with their example of how husband and wife respect and love one another. Once back in the States, they continue to live and witness their love and spread the love for the underprivileged by giving presentations in parishes and high schools. Every year they go to Guatemala to help the underdeveloped and share their experience.



Eric Wooldridge, worked with street kids in Petrolina, Brazil, teaching them self-respect and respect for others. He continues to do this in the US where, like St. John Bosco, he gathers kids and through sports, he helps them to trust in God, in others, and in themselves and to have fun at the same time.

Ariana Olivares – "I was asked to give a talk as a "missioner". My first reaction was, "NO! You don't understand – I am not a missioner. I haven't left for my Mission in Ecuador yet". The fact is: I am a missioner. That is the reality of the present moment. But I often catch myself thinking, "I can't wait to go to Ecuador and be on a real mission." Truth of the matter is we have already been sent! We are all missioners wherever we are. We shouldn't be waiting for an acceptance letter to be part of a mission organization, or a cross around our necks, or a visa or a plane ticket. We are missioners now!"



St. Dominic Savio, established a sodality among his peers in honor of Mary's Immaculate Conception. Using his creativity, gentleness and friendly demeanor as a true missioner and servant, he was able to spread this small, but effective, devotion to his classmates. He was successful in drawing others to holiness because he approached things he loved with truth and earnestness. Followers were never in doubt of his genuine intentions. By putting his longing for holiness into practice among his friends, he strengthened the atmosphere of the Oratory and exemplified what a true missioner looks like without ever leaving the grounds.

Blessed Laura Vicuña, determined and committed herself to bringing her mother back to God. She went about doing this by demonstrating God's love to her mom and making an ultimate sacrifice: she offered her life to God for her mother's conversion. Her mission was difficult. Her life, in all its details, was marked by brutality, fear, suffering, and abuse; still, Laura resonated peace, confidence, heroic courage and love.



Dan Groucutt – "My experience in Swaziland has inspired me to continue to live a life in service to others. Seeing firsthand the hardships the children face there has strengthened my desire to help educate the disadvantaged. Currently I am teaching at St. Michael Indian School in the Navajo Nation. Though I am technically no longer a volunteer, I see my work as a service to God, accompanying the youth I'm teaching, as St. Mary Mazzarello did."

Marco Giroldi – "Since I left my Venezuela mission everything is different. I miss my boys, the street, the difficulties, the anguish; but also the joy and the life The best way to actively remember our experience will be to help others around us to understand the importance of being grateful for all that we have ... because at the same time, in the opposite corner of the world there is a person who suffers: this person is not only a photo, a written phrase, or video clip. We have lived with them, we know their name, we have touched them, embraced them. The true mission ... needs to begin at home."



Mary Becker – "On mission in Mozambique I taught chemistry to high school girls. Now I am in the medical profession. I intend to live the VIDES legacy of accompaniment by being a missioner each and every day as a physician. Meanwhile, I engage my co-professionals in discussion about why they went into medicine and what we can all do to use our skills to help others."

**YOUR STORY
HAS YET
TO BE WRITTEN...**



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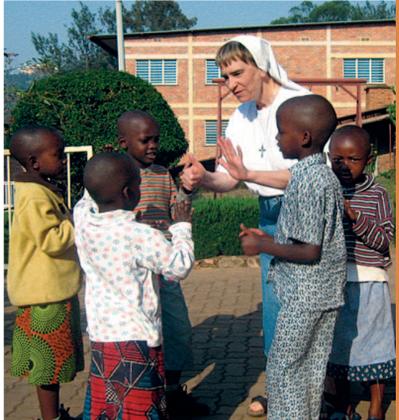
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Bosco Young People in Action!



Don Bosco wants you!



Find the program that's a good fit!

	VIDES+USA	VIDES+East USA	VIDES Canada	Salesian Lay Missioners	Salesian Volunteers
Age maximum	35+	35+	35+	--	30+
Age minimum	21	21	18	20	18
Application deadline	Oct March	April	Rolling	May	March April
Commitment: maximum	--	1 yr	--	3 yr	--
Commitment: minimum	1 mth	1 mth	3 mth	1 yr	6 mth
Living: w/religious community	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Living: w/intentional community	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Domestic placements	✓	--	--	✓	✓
Families accepted	✓	✓	✓	--	--
Foreign language requirement	✓	✓	✓	--	--
Gender	F/M	F/M	F/M	F/M	F/M
International placements	✓	✓	✓	✓	Mexico
Loan Deferment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Married accepted	✓	✓	✓	✓	--
Medical insurance*	✓	✓	--	✓	✓
Mid-year retreat*	--	--	--	✓	✓
Open to non-Catholics	✓	✓	✓	--	✓
Orientation: dates*	Jan or Jun	Jul	May	Jul to Aug	Jul to Aug
Orientation: length	2-3 wks	5 wks	2 wks	3 wks	2 wks
Program Size	20	5	7	20	6
Re-entry retreat*	✓	✓	✓	✓	--
Room/Board**	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

* Provided by the sending Salesian province.
 ** Provided by the receiving religious community.