



SOCIETÀ DI SAN FRANCESCO DI SALES

SEDE CENTRALE SALESIANA

Via Marsala, 42 – 00185 Roma

Il Rettor Maggiore

Prot. 21/0464
Rome, 18th December 2021

APPEAL FOR MISSIONARIES 2022

My dearest confreres,

My fraternal and affectionate greetings on the anniversary of the foundation of our Congregation. 162 years ago today, on 18 December 1859, with 17 members, Don Bosco founded our Congregation with the name of « *Pious Society of St. Francis de Sales* ». Since that distant 1859 our Society has not ceased to spread throughout the five continents, with a clear educational charism towards the most disadvantaged youth and a missionary spirit and commitment without geographical limits. So today is a good opportunity to recall that the missionary spirit and commitment are essential elements of Don Bosco's charism. For this reason I have accepted the proposal of the Missions Sector to address my annual invitation for missionaries to all the confreres in all the Provinces of the world today, instead of the traditional 8 December.

On April 3, 1874 Pope Pius IX finally approved the Constitutions of the Society of St. Francis de Sales and on the following April 13 the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars issued the corresponding decree. Seven months later, on 11 November 1875, Don Bosco sent the first Salesian missionary expedition. From then on, the Salesian Congregation grew and spread, and at great speed: in 1863 there were 39 Salesians and by the time of Don Bosco's death in 1888, there were already 768. It is a fact that our missionary commitment has contributed greatly to the spread of the Congregation in 136 countries on all five continents with 14,500 members.

In my letter commemorating the centenary of the death of Fr Paul Albera (AGC 436), I pointed out that one of the characteristics of his service as Rector Major was his commitment to the missions, which he considered essential to the charism of Don Bosco. He ensured missionary expeditions every year, except in 1915 because of the First World War, sending 623 Salesian missionaries. Fr Paul Albera is a constant reminder to all of us today of the value of missionary commitment in our Congregation. And as he and all my predecessors have done, I continue to invite my confreres to be generous, especially those who feel a special call from the Lord within the vocation that we all live as Salesians of Don Bosco. GC20 already insisted that «the missions concern the whole Congregation; therefore, all the confreres are involved in them in different ways» (GC20, 480).

Therefore, I invite you, dear confreres, to make a careful discernment to understand whether the Lord is calling you to put yourselves at the disposal of the Rector Major, anywhere in the world, for the *missio ad gentes, ad exteros*, which implies a lifelong commitment.



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I encourage the Provincials to be the first to help the confreres to cultivate the missionary desire in their lives and to facilitate their discernment, inviting them, after personal dialogue with you, to place themselves at the disposal of the Rector Major to respond to the missionary needs of the Congregation. Then the General Councillor for the Missions, in my name, will continue the discernment that will lead to the choice of the missionaries for the 153rd missionary expedition that will take place, God willing, on Sunday 26th September 2022, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco, as it has been done since the time of Don Bosco.

I thank the 44 confreres who responded generously to my missionary appeal last December 8, 2020. After careful discernment, under the guidance of the General Councillor for the Missions, involving the candidates themselves, their Provincials and Rectors, and with their council, we have accepted 23 to be part of the 152nd missionary expedition. I also gave new missionary destinations to three other missionaries.

Travelling is still not easy because of the COVID-19 virus pandemic. In spite of this, last November 21 we had a wonderful missionary send off in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco with 9 missionaries who also represented the other members of the 152nd missionary expedition who could not come. The send-off was preceded by a short but intense orientation course organised by the Missions Sector. The blessed missionary crosses were sent to the other missionaries who could not be present. I asked their Provincials to give these to them in the name of the Rector Major. When it will be easier to travel, the Missions Sector will organise an orientation course for those who could not attend this year's course.

The dialogue with the General Councillor for the Missions and the shared reflection within the General Council allows me to indicate what are some of the urgencies identified for 2022 and where I would like a considerable number of confreres to be sent:

- in our presence with indigenous peoples and on the missionary frontiers of Latin America;
- in Africa and the new frontiers of North Africa;
- in Albania, Kosovo, Slovenia and other new frontiers of Project Europe;
- in Azerbaijan, Laos, Nepal, Mongolia;
- in our numerous presences on the islands of Oceania.

My dear confreres, I repeat my conviction that it is the missionary thrust of the Congregation that invigorates it, gives it new vocational enthusiasm and revitalises the charismatic identity of the confreres and of our entire Congregation.

I greet you with true affection


D. Angel Fernandez A., SDB
Rector Major

