



SOCIETÀ DI SAN FRANCESCO DI SALES

SEDE CENTRALE SALESIANA

Via Marsala, 42 – 00185 Roma

Il Rettor Maggiore

Prot. 20/0522
Rome, 8th December 2020

APPEAL FOR MISSIONARIES 2021

My dearest Confreres,

a fraternal and affectionate greeting on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, a day which I have chosen since 2016 to send a fervent missionary invitation to all the confreres in all the Provinces of the world.

We continued to experience the serious consequences of the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus. Mary's Immaculate Conception reminds us that God acts to save humanity. Thus, today's Solemnity gives birth to hope in us because we believe that this situation will be overcome since God continues to make "all things new" in the world today. And Mary continues to be for us today a "sign of sure hope and consolation" (*Lumen Gentium*, 68).

December 8 is also a date that is dear to us Salesians because it marks the beginning of Don Bosco's work for poor and abandoned youth. Thanks to the missionary spirit and zeal of our founder, today we continue his mission to be "witnesses-sign" of God's saving Love for poor and marginalised youth in the most diverse cultural and religious contexts in 134 countries. If it had not been for the missionary spirit of Don Bosco and the missionary generosity of the first Salesians, probably today we would only be a small congregation with few members in Italy.

In the programme I proposed to the Salesian Congregation after GC28, I stressed that it is a time of generosity for our Congregation which is always missionary. My dear Confreres, what am I inviting you to? I am inviting you to relive the generosity and missionary vitality at the beginning of our Congregation.

It is a time of generosity to all the Provinces and not only to those that have greater possibility to offer help to other confreres but even to those Provinces that are numerically poorer in terms of number of confreres. It is a time of generosity to our Congregation to which we all joyfully belong. Indeed, we are all co-responsible for the evangelising and missionary work of the Salesians of Don Bosco throughout the world.

Therefore, I encourage you, my dear Confreres, to make a careful discernment if the Lord is calling you to place yourselves at the disposal of the Rector Major for *missio ad gentes, ad externos, ad vitam* anywhere in the world. Let us keep in mind that God does not allow Himself to be defeated in generosity.



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Certainly, a greater missionary generosity will stir up a renewed vitality in the Province and, God willing, also new vocations to replace those who depart for the missions.

I encourage the Provincials to be the first to help the confreres nurture in themselves the missionary desire and to facilitate their discernment by inviting them, after personal dialogue with you, to make themselves available to the Rector Major in order to respond to the missionary needs of the Congregation. Then the General Councillor for the Missions, on my behalf, will continue the discernment that will lead to the choice of missionaries for the 152nd missionary expedition.

I thank the generosity of the 24 missionaries of the 151st missionary expedition this year and their Provinces. Due to the current pandemic, the ceremony of the giving of the missionary cross has been postponed until the first quarter of 2021. However, the next missionary expedition will be the 152nd and it will be held, God willing, on 26th September 2021, Sunday, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco, as it has been done since Don Bosco's time.

The dialogue with the General Councillor for the Missions and the shared reflection within the General Council allows me to specify what are some urgencies identified for 2021 and where I would like a significant number of confreres to be sent:

- in our presences in the Amazon and in some missionary frontiers of Latin America;
- in Salesian presences at the service of refugees and in the new frontiers of Africa;
- in Lithuania, Bulgaria and other new frontiers of the Project Europe;
- in Azerbaijan, Laos, Nepal, Mongolia, Yakutsk;
- in our numerous presences in the islands of Oceania.

Of course, everything will depend on the generous response to this missionary appeal.

My dear Confreres, I pray for this and I entrust this intention to the intercession of our Immaculate Mother and Help of Christians, asking Don Bosco to continue to nurture in his Salesians the same missionary zeal he has experienced.

I greet you with genuine affection



Fr. Angel Fernández A., SDB
Rector Major