

The Missions Sector 2020-2025

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General Councillor for Missions

(Main parts are excerpts from the Rector Major's Report to GC29.)

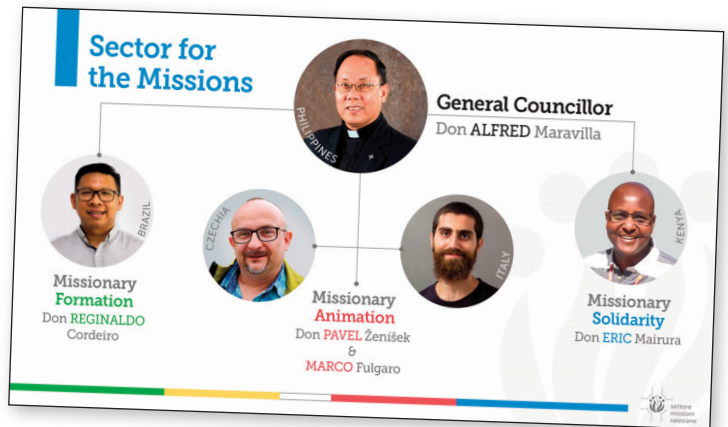
THE GENERAL COUNCILLOR AND THE MISSIONS SECTOR

A 'Position Paper' is an essay that presents a topic to the Salesian communities and to the Educative Pastoral Communities (EPC) with the aim of enlightening and encouraging further discussion and reflection on the topic.

The General Councillor for the missions fosters the missionary spirit and commitment throughout the whole Society. He coordinates initiatives and directs activity in the missions...It is

also his duty to see that provision is made for the specific preparation and updating of the missionaries (C. 138). In order to carry out this task, he is assisted by a team of 3 Salesians and a layman who cover the following areas:

mission animation, missionary formation and vocation, missionary solidarity, new frontiers, and secretarial tasks of the Missions Sector.



NEW MISSIOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Today we find ourselves in a different context from the missionary projects that spread the Congregation to America (1875), Asia (1906) and Africa (1980). New perspectives and questions have led to new missiological reflections. Of course, today there are still peoples or socio-cultural contexts in which Christ is not known. In many countries, especially in urban centres, there are those who do not know Jesus, those who after knowing him have abandoned him, or those who live their faith as something cultural.

Today 'missions' cannot be understood only in terms of geography, of movement towards 'mission lands' as in the past, but also in terms of sociology, culture and, even, presence in the digital continent. So the missions are found wherever there is a need to proclaim the Gospel. Today the missionaries come from all continents and are sent to all continents. For many Salesians today "the missions" are linked to the romanticised imagery of Father John Cagliero on horseback or of a Salesian in a white robe, with long and appropriately grubby beard, who distributes food and materials to the poor; or a lonely builder of churches, schools, homes for the poor, etc. Therefore, **a renewed vision of Salesian missions for the entire Congregation is urgently needed.** In fact, all the activities and interventions of the Missions Sector outlined in the Rector Major's 2020-2025 Animation and Government Project in four areas (vocation and formation, animation, solidarity, new frontiers) are fully oriented towards this renewal.

This change of missionary paradigm still demands a journey of conversion of mind and heart from many confreres in order to appropriate it. On the other hand, we find ourselves in a situation where **missiological reflection is lacking in the Congregation** because there are very few who have been formed in missiology,

anthropology or inter-religious dialogue. Therefore, the General Councillor for the Missions continues to urge provincials to send confreres to specialise in these areas.

To keep Don Bosco's wish that the work of the missions be the permanent concern of the Congregation alive (GC 19, p. 178), that it was not just a personal interest of his but a true *charisma foundationis* passed on by our Founder to his Salesians and to the whole Salesian Family (L. Ricceri, AGC 267, p.14), the Missions Sector is committed to fostering and renewing the missionary spirit of the Salesians and all the members of the EPC.

PARADIGM CHANGE

The **unified pastoral ministry** that has been used in the Congregation from GC20 until today has led to the creation of the '**super-Sectors**', like an octopus that pulls everything to itself. Already by GC26, 27 and 28 the need for better collaboration between the Sectors was called for. Steps have been taken, but still, the reality is not ideal. With unified pastoral ministry as the paradigm for congregational animation, the problem will persist. More than a structural change, what **the Congregation needs is a change of animation paradigm**. So there is an urgent need to find another paradigm.

COLLABORATIVE ANIMATION

Over these five years the Missions Sector has been committed to promoting missionary culture at the Congregational level, promoting the transition from unified missionary animation to **collaborative missionary animation**, from top-down animation, focused on the General Councillor, to the Provinces. Collaborative

animation, a consequence of **collaborative ministry**, is based on the principles of *subsidiarity*, *shared responsibility* and *empowerment*. It is an animation paradigm that seeks to develop a Congregational network of collaborators committed to faithful, creative and collaborative involvement in their Provinces. The main strength of this animation paradigm has been the work of coordination: placing the different actors involved in communication with one another, making the good that is done in this area known inside and beyond the Congregation, setting in motion or strengthening shared rather than isolated paths.

Animating Nucleus: The Missions Sector Team

The cornerstone of collaborative animation is the *animating nucleus* as a group with one heart and one soul that is in solidarity as it takes up the task of convening, motivating, involving all those concerned to keep the missionary commitment and spirit alive throughout the Congregation. The animating nucleus is the Missions Sector team led by the General Councillor with all his collaborators (**Mr. Marco Fulgaro**, **Fr. Reginaldo Cordeiro**, **Fr. Eric Mairura** and **Fr. Pavel Ženíšek**). When the General Council meets in summer and winter, in addition to the various side meetings of the councillors, the General Councillor for Missions chairs **the**

weekly meeting of the entire Sector team. A weekend of fraternity, rest and relaxation also takes place as *team building*.



Regional Coordinators for Missionary Animation

The pivot has been the creation of the figure of the Sector contact person for each of the 7 Regions of the Congregation and the appreciation of the figure and role of those who are locally responsible. The contact person in the Sector actively participates in all the meetings, face-to-face and on-line, in his Region; he dialogues with the Regional Coordinator for Missionary Animation (RCMA) and supports that person in their task of regional coordination of missionary animation; reports to the General Councillor for the Missions and to the Missions Sector team on the progress of missionary animation in the Region and suggests strategies to improve missionary animation in the Region.

Province Delegates for Missionary Animation

The first consequence of collaborative animation is the value given to the figure and role of the Regional Coordinators for Missionary

2024

MISSIONARY ANIMATION Responsible persons in Salesian Provinces and Regions
ANIMAZIONE MISSIONARIA Persone responsabili nelle Ispettorie e regioni salesiane

FOAMA = Provincial Delegate for MISSIONARY ANIMATION
DIAM = Delegato ispettoriale per ANIMAZIONE MISSIONARIA

CORAM or **RCMA** = Regional Coordinators for M.A.
COMAM = Coordinatore Regionale per l'A.M.

Mediterranean Region
 Regione Mediterraneo

Africa - Madagascar Region
 Regione Africa - Madagascar

South Asia Region
 Regione Asia Sud

Central-North Europe Region
 Regione Europa Centro-Nord

Cono Sud Region
 Regione Cono Sud

East Asia - Oceania Region
 Regione Asia Est - Oceania

Interamerica Region
 Regione Interamerica

Sector for the missions
 Settore per le missioni

Animation (RCMA) and the **Province Delegates for Missionary Animation** (PDMA), which has led to a growing awareness of the identity and importance of quality animation.

In the whole Congregation the most challenging regions to animate are the **Europe Centre-North and Mediterranean regions**. Some Provinces in ECN do not have any PDMA for years, some PDMA's are appointed but do not function for various reasons. But the greatest challenge is that many confreres in both regions still have the old vision of the missions and of missionary animation as tied to raising funds for people out 'there'.

Regional Commission for Missionary Animation,

The creation of a **Regional Commission For Missionary Animation**, made up of several PDMA's from the region, was promoted, who help the RCMA in its coordinating role, particularly in the preparation and organisation of meetings. In some regions the regional commission is already active and well-functioning, in others it is in its infancy, while some regions have yet to form it.

Provincial Commission for Missionary Animation

Along with these steps, the PDMA's are invited to be accompanied by a **Provincial Commission for Missionary Animation** (comprising Salesians, lay people and young people) that encourages collaborative work. As a challenge for the future, there is a need to overcome the too frequent change of PDMA since it does not always allow planned and effective work and forming a commission that really works.

The Local Delegate for Missionary Animation

In South Asia Region the RCMA has consistently invited the Provincials to appoint the **Local Delegate for Missionary Ani-**

mation (LDMA). This is a precious intuition that could make missionary animation effective at the local level. This also allows the PDMA to focus on the animation of the LDMA and work directly with the **Rectors of the local communities**. Through regular on-line and some in-person meetings during the year the LDMA will be the moving agents at the local level. In the coming six-year-period the role of the LDMA is to be developed in all Provinces.

Regional Meetings

In addition, **annual regional meetings** were organised during this five-year period, some of which were inter-regional (Interamerica and South Cone twice; South Asia and East Asia-Oceania; Central and North Europe and the Mediterranean). This collaborative animation has allowed for greater sharing between the PDMAs, a fruitful exchange of best practices and the start or continuation, depending on the Regions, of a shared path at the Regional and Congregational level.

Advisory Teams

Another consequence of collaborative animation is the creation of the **three Advisory Teams** composed of co-responsible lay people, together with representatives of the Missions Sector, and, where appropriate, representatives of another relevant Sector. The *Advisory Team* has as its primary purpose the maintenance of the link with the Missions Sector and the creation of spaces and occasions in which collaboration, networking and the sharing of best practices can help the Missions Sector to achieve the objectives set out in the *RM's animation and government project* and to develop and assist local appointees in the specific contexts of the Provinces in which they work. It meets online at regular intervals accompanied by the Sector contact person in its area of responsibility within the Missions Sector team. Thus, created were an Advisory Team for Salesian Missionary Volunteering (one member of which is part of the team in the

Youth Ministry Sector), another for the Provincial Mission Offices (one member of which is part of the Economist General's Office team) and another for the Salesian Missionary Museums.

The **SMV Advisory Team** comprises lay experts who share responsibility in Salesian Missionary Volunteering, together with representatives of the Youth Ministry (Fr. Rafael Bejarano), and Missions Sectors (Fr. Pavel Ženíšek), who meet monthly online and accompany the Congregation in this aspect.

The immense work of the Advisory Team (more than 40 on-line meetings of the whole team, as well as group work; two face-to-face meetings; creation of a dedicated official account salesianvol@sdb.org) allowed the development of a first strategic plan, approved by the Councillors for the Missions and for Youth Ministry and, as a tangible sign of the work, the first Congregational meeting of the coordinators of Salesian Missionary Volunteers was held at the UPS from 5 to 9 March 2024. With a view to promoting the unity and identity of the SMV, the *Advisory Team* is engaged in making the SMV manual, published at the end of the previous six years but little known at the beginning of this period, known and understood. It has promoted the

creation of a cross for Salesian missionary volunteers, and carries out a great deal of communication work (contacts with the leaders of the Provinces, newsletters, design of a large SMV database www.salesianvol.org).



A member of the Missions Sector team (Fr Eric Mairura) acts as coordinator of all the Mission Offices. To assist him, an *Advisory Team* for the **Provincial Mission Offices** has been set up to promote networking, build synergies and solidarity in view of a more effective realisation

of the identity and mission of each Provincial Mission Office. It is composed of 6 members, including a lay person and a representative of the Economer General's Office (Fr. Jose Joseph) and Fr. Mairura who is the contact person. The group meets every month online.



In order to assist the contact person of the Missions Sector (Fr. Reginaldo Cordeiro) in coordinating and animating the Salesian

Missionary Museums, the *Advisory Team* for the **Salesian Missionary Museums** has been set up. It is composed of 4 lay people and one member of the Sector who is the contact person.



The group meets bimonthly online, always alternating meetings among its members and with other lay people who animate or care for the museums in the provinces.

World Advisory Council for the Missions Sector

Another expression of collaborative animation is the *World Advisory Council for the Missions Sector (Consulta Mondiale)* made up of the RCMA's and any other guests. It is ordinarily convened every two years by the General Councillor for the Missions to help fulfil its task: to foster the missionary spirit and commitment throughout the Congregation, to coordinate initiatives, to guide missionary activities and to ensure the formation and updating of missionaries.

Secretary of the Missions Sector

At the beginning of these five years, the figure of **secretary of the Missions Sector** was introduced, whose role is to order and update the digital and physical archives of the Sector in order to maintain historical memory through the minutes of meetings or other interventions, to be available to send materials from the Sector, to answer all questions and requests, to take care of the communication strategy of the Sector, to be in contact with the printing house and the official communication channels of the Salesian Congregation, to attend all the online meetings of the PDMA's and the *three Advisory Teams*. This has made it possible to foster a more effective collaborative animation among all partners at all levels.

MISSIONARY ANIMATION

Missionary animation aims above all to **keep the missionary spirit alive in every Salesian**, expressed in the passion to make Jesus known and to share Jesus' experience of fullness of life and passion for the salvation of others. All Salesians live the missionary

spirit - summarised in the '*Da Mihi Animas*' - because it is rooted in the Salesian charism itself. This does not exclude, but in fact implies that it may give rise among Salesians to the missionary vocation to be sent for a lifetime (*ad vitam*) outside their homeland and cultural environment (*ad exteros*); among those who have not yet heard the Gospel, or where the Church is not yet established (*ad gentes*).

Missionary animation is not restricted to celebration or occasional initiatives. It is rather **a continuous process** of awareness-raising in the Province and in each local educative and pastoral community. When the whole Province and the local educative and pastoral communities are imbued with missionary spirit, the Salesians and the members of the EPC are more willing to open themselves with faith to the call of God. Mission animation seeks to create a 'mission culture' by fostering a sense of initiative, the ability to dream and dare something bigger, openness to other cultures and peoples, solidarity and concern for the poor and marginalised. These, in turn, lead to the appropriation of higher values of love for Jesus and his Church and the desire to share the Gospel especially with those who do not know Jesus or who do not practise the Christian faith. The "missionary culture" does not focus on "recruiting missionaries", but **leads to the discovery of being called to something** that gives a deeper meaning to one's life and to the awareness of living one's Christian life, as well as consecrated life, in a "permanent state of mission" (*EG*, no. 25).

Regional Meetings

The PDMA manual, developed at the end of the previous six-year period (2019) but not adequately publicised, has been disseminated and better understood and remains the reference point. The appointment of RCMA's for the seven Regions, and the two

Advisory Councils (2021 and 2023) for the Missions Sector has fostered more effective mission animation. The **annual face-to-face regional meetings (16 in all) of the PDMAs** have strengthened the sharing and allowed exploration of some important processes and topics for mission animation, conveying the importance of this fundamental dimension that runs across the entire Salesian charism. In order to better visualise the PDMAs and give them due importance, a poster with all the names and faces has been produced and is renewed every year.

Quarterly Online Meeting

The **quarterly online meetings of PDMAs**, led by the RCMA, were initiated. These online meetings always include the contact person of the Sector for the Region, who represents the General Councillor, as well as the secretary of the Missions Sector who draws up the minutes of the meeting and disseminates them. During this five-year period, as many as **90 online meetings** were held.

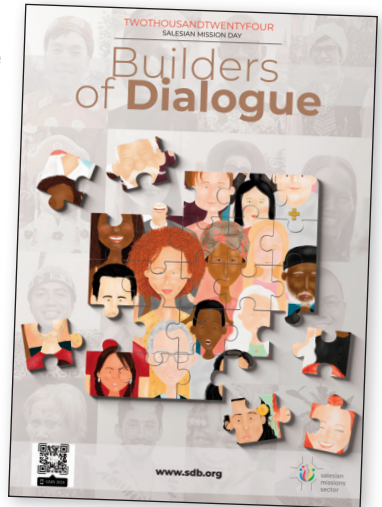
Province Mission Animation Plan

Great insistence was placed on the development by the PDMA of the **Province Mission Animation plan (2020-2025)** in harmony with the Province SEPP, to be presented to provincial councils, so as to have a path to follow with defined stages, resources and deadlines. The **annual letters of the General Councillor for the Missions** after the regional meeting addressed to the **PDMAs**, indicating the way forward, are part of this direction to promote a change of pace and mentality.

Salesian Mission Day

Central to missionary animation of the Provinces and EPCs is the annual **Salesian Mission Day (SMD)**, a consolidated tradition begun in 1988 and constantly renewed in terms of themes, content and style, which in this period has seen greater attention to the form of

the materials presented (booklet, posters, prayers, videos) and a collaboration with the other Sectors (Social Communication, Youth Ministry, Formation) to present the unity of the Salesian mission. By comparison with the past, topics have been chosen which run across all areas, and are easily applicable to each context, transcending geographical criteria. The contents have a more modern and youthful style which helps the sharing of materials with young people, for example shorter and more dynamic videos. The SMD is celebrated at different times and in different ways in each Province and is the high point of mission animation. Some Provinces translate the materials into local languages and adapt them to communities and young people, allowing a greater and better dissemination of the missionary spirit. From the feedback received from the PDMA's, the Provinces appreciate the effort of sharing and reflection for the SMD, even if some complain about the excessive number and disparity of themes to follow during the year (Strenna, SMD, World Mission Day, national/provincial/diocesan theme of the year, etc.).



Monthly Missionary Prayer Intention

Inspired by the Pope's monthly prayer intention, the **missionary prayer intention** is promoted on the 11th

of the month in every Province and community, paying particular attention to the houses of formation, as a reminder of the first missionary expedition.



Resources for Missionary Animation

Great progress has been made in the production and dissemination of publications with mission content. The **Cagliero 11**, bulletin now translated into more than 20 languages, has been systematically published every month without interruption since 2009, reaching number 193 in January 2025, with a new layout that alternates mission contexts and prayer intentions. Each month, **CaglieroLife**, a one-minute video linked to the theme and prayer of the month, is distributed

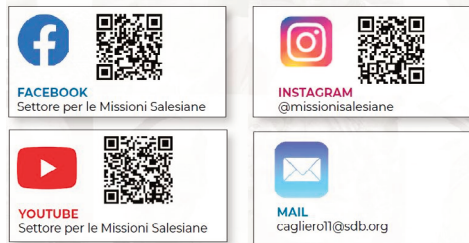
as a mission animation tool and disseminated on social media. The monthly videos are professionally produced by the **Don Bosco International Media Academy (DBIMA)**, in Paris, France.



The **Bosco Food** project, i.e. the distribution of weekly recipes that promote an intercultural approach through cooking and at the same time make all the countries where

the Salesians are present known, has been an animation staple and, in view of the 150th anniversary of the first Salesian missionary expedition, will be published in book form. The contents of *Cagliero11*, *Cagliero Life* and *Bosco Food* are under the care of Fr. Pavel Ženíšek.

These materials, along with other missionary news, are distributed and published, making full use of today's social communication tools: Whatsapp, new official email account *cagliero11@sdb.org*, Facebook page Youtube channel, Instagram profile, *sdb.org* and *infoans.org* official websites. Collaboration with the ANS editorial staff and the *sdb.org* website operator has been strengthened, with regular contact and continuous updating, critical points of the past six years. Social channels for the Missions Sector have been created,



are maintained on a daily basis and are an excellent tool to reach communities and young people. Mr. Marco Fulgaro is responsible for the **distribution and dissemination** of everything the Sector produces via different platforms used by the Sector. In addition, the collaboration with the recently launched *Salesian Bulletin Online* makes it possible to have at least one mission-themed article per month.

MISSIONARY FORMATION

In 2000, the General Councillor for the Missions launched a missionary refresher and renewal course held at the Pontifical Salesian University. The course was entirely funded by the Mis-

sions Sector, while a member of the faculty of theology oversaw its organisation and conduct. From 2007 to 2019, a member of the Sector also ran the eight-week course called the *Corso di Pastorale Missionaria*. After much reflection, discussion and consultation among those involved, the General Councillor for the Missions decided to embark on and develop a new course from 2024.

The Corso Germoglio



In order to prepare missionary departures, the Missions Sector organises the *Corso Germoglio* [literally, 'germoglio' is a shoot or sprouting of a plant] five weeks before the missionary sending out. The course is intended as an orientation and immediate preparation for the departing missionaries. Some members of other Sectors are invited to the course to present a topic to the **new missionaries**. Through prayer, the witness of life, contact with places linked to the Salesian charism, the sharing of experiences and personal reflections, the participants are helped to deepen missionary values and attitudes so that the shoot of the missionary vocation can put down deep roots.

The Corso Respiro

In 2024 the *Corso di Pastorale Missionaria* was changed and the *Corso Respiro* [literally *a breather*] began. With a duration of six weeks, the course, which begins with a few days of pilgrimage and spiritual exercises in Don Bosco's places, is intended for **Salesians who work in missionary contexts and desire a time of missionary renewal**, as well as for those who wish to deepen the Salesian missionary spirit or **who carry out or will carry out the service of missionary an-**



imation in their own Provinces. It aims to give a *missionary breather* by revitalising the missionary dimension of one's vocation, to reflect on some theological and pastoral issues related to the mission of the Church and to encourage the sharing of missionary experiences. Thus, the participant returns to his province, infusing it with a Salesian missionary breath. The course was opened to other members of the Salesian Family and to lay people who collaborate in our missionary activities or animation.

The Corso Sorgente

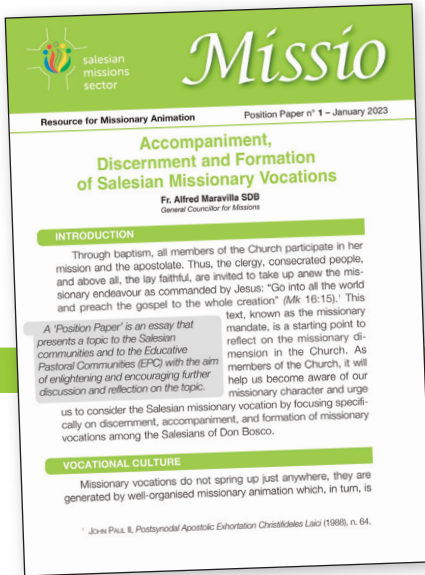
Since availability and missionary commitment cannot be limited in time, the *Corso Sorgente* [literalmente, *la fuente*] is also being organised **for Salesians 70 years and older who have lived a missionary life.**

The dynamics of the three-week course aim to help senior missionaries draw from the source of their own human life and Salesian missionary vocation. Time in the Salesian places, the source of the charism, helps to deepen his charismatic identity as a Salesian missionary to take stock of life in mission with all its joys, suffering, successes and overcoming difficulties. Drawing from these sources, older Salesians are helped to accept their successes and to recognise what did not go as hoped in life. Through this acceptance they are helped to embrace their senior years and live them better in an encounter with themselves, with others and with God. Thus, in old age, the Salesian missionary is helped to continue another level of missionary work: to be a source of wisdom, friendship and inner peace. The Formation Sector helps in these three courses through advice and the presentation of a topic by a member of the team.



PARTICIPANTS IN THE 2020-2024 MISSIONARY COURSES

<i>Corso Germoglio</i> 120	<i>Corso Respiro</i> 87	<i>Corso Sorgente</i> 11
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The '**Missio**' leaflet was initiated to provide a deeper reflection on certain missiological themes. It is a resource for the **ongoing formation** of Salesians and members of the EPC on missiological topics.

ANIMATION VISITS

As a strategic option, the **General Councillor for Missions** has focused on visiting the **frontier missionary presences**, as well as making exploratory visits for potential new presences. The **members of the Missions Sector team** were sent to **visit mainly the Region that they coordinate** for missionary animation, meet the PDMAs and their team, visit the formation houses with particular attention to meeting those who work in the area of the Missions Sector that they are animating.

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150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST MISSIONARY EXPEDITION

In recent years, great emphasis has been placed on preparing for the 150th anniversary of the first Salesian missionary expedition with processes for regional and provincial preparation involving many people. The Missions Sector launched a call for tenders to design a logo, a sign of unity and Congregational focus, and encouraged each province to celebrate this event according to the theme chosen for the occasion: *thank, think, relaunch*. In all the initiatives, the choice was made to prioritise province celebrations to involve the communities more, avoiding an excessive centralisation of events.

The 156th missionary expedition presided over by the Rector Major in Valdocco is planned for 11 November 2025, the 150th anniversary of the first Salesian missionary expedition. In the days around the event (08 - 12 November 2025) there will be a meeting of all PDMA's from all provinces, including a day and a half for young people. An organising group is preparing the activities and logistics.



MISSIONARY VOCATION

Missionary vocations do not spring up just anywhere but are generated by well-organised Salesian missionary animation. This has **two interdependent and mutually complementary purposes**. It aims first of all to **keep *Don Bosco's missionary spirit***

alive in every Salesian and in every educative and pastoral community, and to foster in every Salesian an **openness to discerning** whether the Lord is calling him – within our common Salesian vocation – to commit himself for the whole of his life to the **missionary vocation**.

The Salesian missionary vocation is a more radical expression of Don Bosco's pastoral charity. It is a more generous and radical expression of the common Salesian vocation belonging to all confreres. It is a gift of the Lord's which needs to be invoked in prayer, aroused in the confrere, verified in discernment and accompanied in growth.

This multidirectional missionary movement from all the continents to all the continents teaches us that **today 'the missions' cannot be understood only in geographical terms**, of movement to 'mission lands' as it once was, but also in sociological, cultural and even digital terms. In fact, the missions are found wherever there is a need to proclaim the Gospel. **This missionary paradigm shift implies a renewed missionary profile.**

The missionary is not only the giver, but above all the receiver; not only does he teach, but above all he learns from the people he serves, who are not only passive recipients of his efforts. As a mediator, the missionary does not withhold anything for himself but takes care to keep his zeal for holiness alive through the 'grace of unity', spending himself generously, until he consumes himself.

Each Salesian Province, rich or poor in personnel or resources, shares responsibility for the missionary projects of the entire Congregation. Therefore, there are no longer only 'recipient' or 'sender' or 'missionary' provinces. **All Provinces send and re-**

ceive missionaries. This missionary reciprocity makes us available for the mutual sharing of means, personnel and spiritual help.

The missionary vocation needs careful discernment.

This is a gradual and progressive path that is carried out with the help of a spiritual guide, the Rector and the formation team. The criteria and the process of discerning a missionary vocation are clearly explained in the document *The Missionary Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco*. Published in 2014 by the Missions and Formation Sectors, the document needs to be updated. Although it was planned, the revision did not take place because it is closely linked to the revision of the Ratio.

Those who express an interest in becoming missionaries are **accompanied more closely**, in order to be able to embark on a good path of discernment. **The postnovitiate** is the formation phase where charismatic identity is deepened. Therefore, it **is the most suitable phase for making a serious missionary discernment**. In fact, the experience of recent years shows that it is the formation phase where there is the most lively and generous missionary availability among the formees. **From 2020 to 2025, 120 missionaries were sent out**, including 55 at the end of their postnovitiate, although there is no shortage of missionaries leaving at an older age (ten missionaries over 50); **the average age of the departing missionaries is 32**.

Depending on the case, to better discern a missionary vocation, the provincial can make an **agreement** with another provincial to send a confrere, not only to respond to a specific or urgent need, but above all, as a **missionary experience**, so his missionary promptings can mature.

Over these five years, there has been a consolidation of the process of discernment, choice and sending of missionaries. After sending the **Rector Major's missionary appeal** to all confreres on **18 December** (anniversary of the founding of the Congregation) where the missionary priorities of the year are listed, the General Councillor for the Missions enters into dialogue with those who have presented their missionary availability. The **Provincial and the Provincial Council are involved in this discernment process**, offering written evaluation of the candidate's missionary suitability. If the candidate is in initial formation, the written opinion of the **Rector and the House Council** is also required. The missionary candidate is only accepted to join the Salesian missionary expedition after **a positive opinion on his missionary suitability**.

After a study with the Rector Major on the needs, missionary priorities of the year and possible destinations, the General Councillor for the Missions proposes the destinations of the members of the next missionary expedition to the General Council.

New Missionaries 2020-2024 (151st, 152nd, 153rd, 154th, 155th Missionary Expeditions)

2020	20	2022	24	2024	27
2021	25	2023	24	total	120

	sent	received
AFRICA – MADAGASCAR	57	39
MEDITERRANEAN	3	23
EAST ASIA – OCEANIA	32	17
INTERAMERICA	9	8
SOUTH ASIA	12	3
SOUTH CONE	1	17
CENTRAL – NORTH EUROPE	6	13

Although our vibrant presences in the **region of Africa-Madagascar** are the result of the sacrifices and audacity of missionaries

Project Europe

Although the first Salesian missionaries in Europe were sent as early as 2000, Fr Chávez launched ‘**Project Europe**’ in 2008 as “an act of apostolic courage and an opportunity for charismatic rebirth.”

Project Europe must be placed within the broader context of the new evangelisation of the continent. **Project Europe**, ought to be seen in the broader context of the new evangelisation of the continent.

Statistics available to us show that 153 Salesian missionaries were sent to Europe from 2000 to 2024. Of these, 96 (63%) remained as missionaries on the Continent; 33 (22%) returned to their own Province; 19 (12%) left the Congregation; 5 (3%) moved on to other missions. Fr. Pavel Ženíšek follows-up missionaries for **Project Europe**.



‘Project Europe’ is not comparable to the other missionary projects of our Congregation. Being missionaries in a secularised Europe poses considerable internal and external challenges. In the next six years, it is essential to **help the provinces and communities to understand and accept Project Europe**. Conversely, it is necessary to prepare missionaries for Europe to be open and able to understand the European population and culture well.

The Province of **UNG** is where the missionaries have been integrated into the life and ministry of the Province. The presence of missionaries have led to opening of new apostolates which revitalise the Province. **GBR** is the best practice in the accompaniment and qualification of the missionaries. **SLO** has welcomed

missionaries while they have still some vocations, thus missionaries and local young Salesians effectively journey together to revitalise the Province. In other Provinces Project Europe is either not properly understood by local Salesians, hence their resistance, or the age gap between missionaries and locals is too large to make integration of missionaries possible.

Missionary Volunteering

To the same extent that the Salesian charism and spirit are shared with the members of the EPC, Don Bosco's missionary spirit is shared with the laity, especially with young people, especially through ***Salesian Missionary Volunteering*** (SMV). When there is good animation, SMV participants also flourish. SMV is a service in solidarity, done freely and gratuitously by a young person, sent and welcomed by a community, which is part of the educative and pastoral plan of a Salesian presence or promoted by it, with sufficient continuity of time, motivated by faith, in the missionary style of Don Bosco. SMV is one of the aspects that has grown the most in this six-year period, a theme shared with Youth Ministry, thanks to the contribution of some lay people.

The Missions Sector has agreed to appoint a member of the team to help with some Salesian formation of some VIS volunteers to strengthen their charismatic identity. The visit of the General Councillor with the entire Missions Sector team in 2021 to **VIS headquarters** and the presentation of the work of the Missions Sector during the VIS coordination week in 2023 facilitated the possibility of fostering better collaboration.

Mission Group

The **mission groups** remain a challenge for the coming six-year period. It would be useful to map the current activities of missionary groups

in the Salesian world and try to define their place in mission animation and youth ministry. It would be useful to connect them together and possibly create a network similar to SMV network. After all, these **mission groups** are a **potential seedbed** both for **Salesian missionary volunteers** and for the **Salesian missionary vocation**, as well as for the increased awareness of missionary culture in the provinces.

SALESIAN MISSIONARY MUSEUMS

The museum is a non-profit institution at the service of society that researches, collects, preserves, interprets and exhibits material and intangible finds. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums promote diversity and sustainability. Specifically, Salesian missionary museums pay attention to the original culture of indigenous peoples and encourage intercultural awareness in young people, helping them to grow in mutual respect of peoples and in the discovery of the other. In this category there are also Salesian historical museums.

The first meeting of the Salesian Missionary Museums took place from 18 to 22 January 2024 at Colle Don Bosco to reflect on the identity of the **Salesian Missionary Museum**. To assist **Fr. Reginaldo Cordeiro**, the contact person in the Missions Sector in the coordination and animation of the Salesian Missionary Museums, an Advisory Team for the Salesian Missionary Museums has been set up.

The challenge for the next six years is to consolidate the work just begun with the intention of networking, involving the lay collaborators of the museums and Salesians in



the Province so that together they can show the importance of these museums for the charism and also for the history of that context and for the entire Congregation.

MISSIONARY SOLIDARITY

Don Bosco, aware of the social implications of his work, sought to form young people to be ‘upright citizens and good Christians’. Today we educate and evangelise young people to bring them to full maturity, opening them to the truth, developing their responsible freedom, promoting their commitment to justice, peace and care for creation.

The Mission Offices

The **Province Mission Office** is an expression of Don Bosco’s charism (AGC 443). It is established by the Provincial “with the consent of his Council in agreement with the General Councillor for the Missions” (R. 24). The mission office is committed to promoting a vision of development that concerns the totality of the person and involves all aspects of our humanity, including evangelisation and the defence of the integrity of creation. It is rooted in the teachings of Catholic social doctrine, but is also shared by other religious and faith traditions.

It promotes the good of each person and the whole person in the light of the Gospel, i.e. the cultural, economic, political, social, spiritual, religious, relational, environmental and ecological aspects to help each human being to be more rather than simply to have more. The General Councillor for the Missions, the Economist General and a Regional Councillor are *ex-officio* members of the Administrative Council of **Mission Offices at Congregational lev-**

el (AGC 444). Over these five years the creation of a *National Mission Office* was also encouraged in countries where there are several provinces in the same territory, with Statutes approved by the Rector Major and his Council.

Fr. Eric Mairura serves as the coordinator of all the mission offices. To assist him an Advisory Team was set up for Mission Offices. This networking and coordination need to be strengthened in the next six-year period.

The Distribution of the Rector Major

Clear guidelines on the distribution of the “**missionary solidarity**” (fund) of the Rector Major have been publicised (AGC 436). Requests are submitted by the Provincial, with the consent of his Council, submitting a ‘Project’ with the Project Request form which has been prepared by the Missions Sector, duly completed within the established deadlines (30 March and 30 October each year). All requests are submitted to the representatives of the Missions Sectors and the Economer General’s Office for examination. They are then examined by a Commission chaired by the General Councillor for the Missions, with the Economer General and a General Councillor at the beginning of the General Council session. Finally, they are presented to the Rector Major and his Council for discussion and final approval. Mission Offices will then be authorised to distribute the funds on behalf of the Rector Major.

SDB Emergency Response Mechanism

Since 2016, Fr Chavez appointed a coordinator in emergency situations, in the person of the Missions Sector coordinator for mission offices. Since 2017, the “*SDB Emergency Response Mechanism*” protocol on how to respond to emergencies involving the entire Congregation has been drafted and is to be finalised

and publicised over the next six years. The emergencies caused by COVID 19 and the war in Ukraine have activated this mechanism, involving the numerous stakeholders ensuring the arrival of the necessary aid in a short time. **Fr. Eric Mairura** is the **coordinator** of the SDB response in times of emergency.

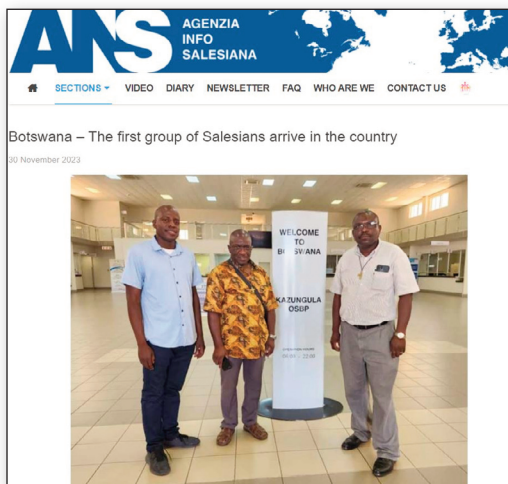
The Don Bosco Network (DBN) is a network of Salesian-inspired Catholic NGOs that translates into action “the values expressed by the Salesian tradition of solidarity”, focus-



ing its intervention mainly “on education according to Don Bosco’s principles”, particularly of “poor and marginalised children and young people”. The DBN is a place for dialogue, exchange and coordination in our common effort to help poor and marginalised children and young people. The General Councillor for the Missions is an ex officio member of the Administrative Council, as representative of the Rector Major and his Council. These five years have seen increased **cooperation** and **coordination between the DBN and the Congregation**, particularly in the sponsorship of Province projects and in emergency response. The challenge for the next six years is to deepen the quality and effectiveness of this coordination, yet maintaining its **own identity as clearly distinct from that of the Congregation**.

NEW FRONTIERS: SIGNS OF HOPE

The missionary thrust of the Congregation invigorates faith, gives new vocational enthusiasm and revitalises the charismatic identity of the confreres. In addition, it frees us from the dangers



of gentrification, spiritual superficiality and genericism, and projects us into the future with hope. It is the task of the General Councillor for the Missions to examine invitations to open new presences and to explore new missionary frontiers. During this five-year period, new presences were opened in Niger and Botswana.

In September 2024, three Salesians arrived in Greece to study modern Greek with a view to opening a new presence in the diocese of Santorini. The opening of a new presence in Algeria was approved by the Rector Major in 2022 but the issuance of the visa continues to be delayed. The new presence in Vanuatu is already being prepared. In May 2024, the General Councillor for the Missions was in Kazakhstan on an exploratory visit at the invitation of the Apostolic Prefect of Atyrau. In 2024 we are present in 137 countries.

The vicariate apostolic, or apostolic prefecture is a specific portion of the people of God that has not yet been constituted as a diocese and is entrusted to the pastoral care of Vicar Apostolic or Prefect Apostolic, who govern it in the name of the Pope. Today there are 8 **Vicariates Apostolic entrusted to the Congregation:** Baku (Azerbaijan), Chaco Paraguayo (Paraguay), Gambella (Ethiopia), Mendez (Ecuador), Mixes (Mexico), Peten (Guatemala), Pucallpa (Peru) and Puerto Ayacucho (Venezuela). The General

Councillor for the Missions has been able to visit three of these over these five years. The confreres who work there promote the growth of the local Church in view of it becoming a diocese.

The Missions Sector, the Formation Sector and the Salesian Provincial Conference South Asia (SPCSA) organised a **research seminar on sharing Salesian charism and mission** with people of other faiths, from 28 January to 1 February 2024 in Hyderabad, India. This intellectual and spiritual exchange is intended to take small but significant steps towards greater inter-religious collaboration, reflecting the Salesian commitment to embrace people of other faiths to serve the young poor.

The Missions Sector has prioritised the Salesian work carried out among **refugees**, trying to make known and spread awareness of this phenomenon. A dedicated account (*refugees@sdb.org*) was set up and updates were sent out periodically, along with animation material from the Holy See. The collaboration with the Migrants and Refugees Division of the Holy See (now part of the Dicastery for Integral Human Development) continued and grew through contacts and participation in the consultations that preceded the publication of several Church guidelines on the phenomena related to displacement. Some Salesian initiatives have been incorporated into best practices and



shared with the universal Church. In order to make this important Salesian frontier mission known to the whole Congregation, spelt out in the four verbs of Pope Francis - *Welcome, Protect, Promote* and *Integrate* - the Missions Sector did a survey on Salesian work with refugees and gypsies to provide missionary guidelines to the provinces and Salesians involved in this apostolate. The Councillor's visits, together with some of his staff, to some communities reinforced this commitment.

For the next six years, more work needs to be done on systematising and coordinating to spread a Congregational vision of working with refugees and gypsies. A survey was carried out on the **Salesian presence among Muslims** in order to present an updated picture of the type of work carried out by the Salesians in this context.

Don Bosco sent his missionaries to the natives of Patagonia. Later, other Salesians worked among other indigenous peoples. Today, the Congregation promotes and preserves the identity of indigenous peoples by establishing cultural museums, writing dictionaries and books, and promoting programs that foster their integral evangelisation. This is an important expression of Salesian commitment to the poor and marginalised.

Congregational concern for **indigenous peoples** does not support any ideology or lobby groups. It is instead rooted in our fundamental identity as created in the image and likeness of God (*Gen 1:27*), which is deeper than any indigenous identity. From this derive their rights based on their indigenous origin or identity. The most important program and service for indigenous peoples is to help them become fully human, ac-

ording to the image that God has of us and to which he calls us. This also entails an invitation to friendship with Jesus Christ, who fully humanises people, makes them fully dignified and brings every heart and all of life to fulfilment. On 4-6 October 2023, the Missions Sector organised study days on indigenous peoples. The proceedings for these have been published. After 150 years of promoting indigenous peoples, there is an urgent need for a deeper reflection at Congregational level on the challenges and opportunities of this apostolate, providing clear renewed missiological guidelines. This is a challenge for the next six years.

A MERE WORKER IN THE LORD'S VINEYARD

*We have come to the end of my mandate
as General Councillor for the Missions.
It is an opportune moment to take a step
back and look far ahead.
The missionary work
of the Congregation
is not only beyond our efforts, but also beyond our vision.
In our period of service, we accomplish
only a fraction of Don Bosco's mission.*

*No initiative is complete.
No animation visit completely revitalises.
No missionary sending meets all the needs of the missions.
No missionary orientation
fully prepares one to face challenges.
No OPP or SEPP fully realizes the mission
of the Congregation.*

*We plant seeds that may one day grow.
We water the seeds that have already been planted,
hoping that they will bear abundant fruit in the future.
We grow plants that may produce fruit far
beyond our expectations.
We lay foundations for initiatives
that will need further development.
Our work may be incomplete,
but it is a beginning, a step along the way.*

*This **gives us a sense of liberation** in realising that we cannot do everything.*

*And it is an opportunity to let God do the rest.
Indeed, conclusions are propitious occasions to humbly accept
that we will never see the final results of all our efforts.*

*This means being humble workers in the Lord's vineyard, not masters of the Harvest; **servant-leaders, not messiahs!***

Thank you

*I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the members of the team of the Missions Sector: **Fr. Pavel Ženišek, Fr. Eric Mairura, Fr. Reginaldo Cordeiro, Mr Marco Fulgaro**; to the Regional Coordinators of Missionary Animation (**Fr. Arun Charles, Fr. Marcelo Edwin Coronel, Fr. Tiago Eliomar, Fr. Robert Falzon, Fr. Privat-Ignace Fouda Bieme, Fr. Sunny Palamthattel**), the Provincial Delegates for Missionary Animation and the members of the Advisory Teams for the SMV, the Provincial Mission Offices and the Salesian Missionary Museums, for our wonderful collaborative ministry in promoting the missionary spirit and commitment throughout our Society (C 138).*

Strength to embrace God's will

The deepest desire of my heart before the Lord is to conclude my service and return to my mother Province as an ordinary confrere after GC29, because of its desperate and urgent need of personnel.

I hope that the members of the 29th General Chapter would allow me to fulfil this desire.

Above all, I pray that I will have the strength to accept God's will for me and embrace it wholeheartedly.

My heartfelt 'thank you' to everyone!



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missions
sector