

In the Heart of Madagascar, Where Mission Means Being Present

September 14, 2026

We are writing to you from Madagascar. These days, Fr. Luca Barone, president of Missioni Don Bosco, accompanied by several members of the staff, is visiting the great “red island” off the eastern coast of Africa, so called because of the vivid color of its soil.

This is a special missionary journey, together with Fr. Davide Banzato and the crew of *I Viaggi del Cuore*. The visit is taking us to see firsthand the projects that Salesian missionaries have been carrying out for the past 45 years.

This journey also marks the starting point for the new season of *I Viaggi del Cuore* on Canale 5. **We are here to learn about, meet, and closely document the Salesian realities that will be featured in the upcoming episodes.** The cameras will follow the journey through the works, villages, schools, and stories of the people we meet, bringing the reality of the Salesian mission in Madagascar into the homes of people throughout Italy.

The journey takes us through the works, communities, and places where missionaries accompany the most vulnerable young people every day, including the many children living on the streets. From the heart of the capital, Antananarivo, to the countryside of the *brousse*, from the highlands to the eastern coast, **this missionary journey allows us to cross a country of great contrasts and extraordinary beauty, but above all to meet the Salesians who give a face to the mission and who have chosen to stand alongside those on the margins.**

Here, the Salesian mission takes on its most concrete meaning: **being present.** Being alongside children who go to school, young people searching for a future, and families living in extremely vulnerable conditions. **Being there where services are often far away and opportunities are even scarcer.**

This missionary journey takes us to Fianarantsoa, Antananarivo, Ivato, Tamatave, on the eastern coast of the island, and into the *brousse* of Betafo, where the village of Vohibe is home to a community of approximately 21,000 people, most of whom depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Here, poverty and difficulties within the education system mean that about 40% of children do not complete primary school.

The Salesian school, which currently serves 278 children, can no longer meet the growing demand. The classrooms are deteriorated and overcrowded, with classes reaching 65 students, too few desks, and difficult conditions, especially during the rainy season. **Missioni Don Bosco wants to support a major renovation project to create a safe, welcoming school environment suited to learning,** eliminating overcrowding and making it possible to serve at least 380 children.

This will be the project that Missioni Don Bosco presents at the Christmas Concert at the Vatican, helping to make the reality of Vohibe known and raising the support needed to transform the school into a larger, safer, and more welcoming space.

This initiative means more than simply building new classrooms: **it means combating school dropout and giving many children in Vohibe the opportunity to study and build their own future.**