



PRESENTATION OF THE RECTOR MAJOR'S REPORT **MISSIONS SECTOR**

Article 138 of our Constitutions as well as the six-year Plan, have guided and been the backbone of the Mission Sector's commitment over this period.

Much advantage and enlightenment has come from the outstanding missionary character of the pontificate of Pope Francis as well as the clear insistence and encouragement of the Rector Major with his Council. In this respect, the "*Missionary re-reading of GC27*", drawn up by the Sector at the beginning of the six-year period, highlighted this clear opportunity for missionary animation and promotion coming from the Church and the Congregation. In presenting this Re-reading, we read that it was now high time for "*simultaneously doing a Salesian re-reading of Pope Francis' Evangelium Gaudium. Hence it was a case of not forgetting GC27, and at the same time for the Salesians of Don Bosco to intensely live this time of missionary renewal throughout the entire Church.*"

The direct involvement of the Rector Major with his Council in the missionary animation of the Congregation has been implemented via: (1) the missionary appeal addressed to the entire Congregation, something that has occurred uninterruptedly since 2016 each 8 December; (2) the fact that the Rector Major has presided at each of the Missionary Expeditions; (3) the convocation, halfway through the six-year period, of all provincials at the time to Turin around the time of the missionary send-off; (4) numerous interventions of a decidedly missionary character at a variety of levels (ANS, Salesian Bulletin, interventions during Team Visits to the Regions and at formal meetings with confreres in every one of the Provinces visited), and so on. In this regard we could say that the Missions Sector has acted as an amplifier and multiplier of the missionary ministry of the Rector Major himself.

It has been a delicate and strategic task of the Councillor for the Missions to set up, accompany and develop the Sector team. He has been greatly supported in this by the generosity of the Provinces that have placed very competent confreres at the disposition of the Rector Major for this service. Each one of the collaborators in the sector, in spelling out their *job description*, has been at the head of one of the three dimensions that were presented as part of the six-year plan – ***Missionary vocation ad gentes, Mission animation, Mission solidarity*** – and that are described and evaluated in what follows.

Missionary vocation *ad gentes* and missionary formation

The publication of the written aid entitled "*Missionary formation of the Salesians Don Bosco*" in the previous six-year period has been of assistance by offering a clear pathway for all confreres as well as clear criteria for discernment of the *special* missionary vocation. It has become an integral part of the formation journey, especially in initial formation. It would need to be enriched with materials to be used in the various formation stages and perhaps even by drawing up some handbooks.

The Councillor himself has followed up and personally got to know the vast majority of the confreres who have presented their request to the Rector Major to be missionaries *ad gentes*. In this discernment of the *ad gentes* vocation, we have listened to Provincials from the province of origin and perhaps even more so the Rectors of post-novitiates. The process of choosing the destination for new missionaries has been enriched by steps that include dialogue between Councillor and the Rector

Major, the Councillor and *receiving* Provincials, the Councillor and members of the Missions team, and then presentation of these destinations to all the General Council, where Councillors (Regionals in particular) have ample opportunity to contribute their observations, uncertainties and experiences. Further ways to get to know the candidates more deeply before choosing their missionary destination may well be considered..

The course which prepares for the annual bestowing of the missionary crucifix in Valdocco has grown significantly in quality. Between 2014 and 2019, 130 missionaries *ad gentes*, *ad exteros*, *ad vitam* have been sent out.

	Sent	Received
<i>Africa-Madagascar</i>	36	11
<i>America South Cone</i>	04	13
<i>East Asia-Oceania</i>	38	28

	Sent	Received
<i>South Asia</i>	28	05
<i>Central & North Europe</i>	07	31
<i>Mediterranean</i>	08	23
<i>Inter-America</i>	09	19

In connection with the General Secretariat, it will be important to work to collect data, e.g. how many missionaries *ad gentes* are currently in the Congregation (country of origin, country of mission); situation of new missionaries over the last 20 years. This is to reflect on successes and difficulties and to prepare for future challenges.

Careful accompaniment of the young missionaries *ad gentes* included in Project Europe has continued. Every two years a continental meeting has continued to be held, and in the intermediate year, inter-provincial meetings were held for European areas. The contact person for formation in the Missions Sector has visited missionaries belonging to Project Europe in their Provinces on several occasions, also having the opportunity to exchange thoughts with the Provincial and his delegate for missionaries.

The Mission Sector has continued to foster missionary collaboration *ad tempus*, facilitating the temporary transfer of confreres from one Province to another for missionary motives. Ordinarily, these transfers have lasted at least three years, and have been limited to perpetually professed.

Accompaniment of the three-month Missions Course at the UPS entered a state of decline that in fact led to its suspension in 2015. Reflection during this six-year period has led a change of name from “a course for missionaries” to “an ongoing formation course in missionary pastoral ministry”. It resumed with renewed vigour in 2016. For the first time, the 22nd repeat of the course in 2018 was conducted completely in English, the choice now being made that it will be held, in alternate years, in Italian and English respectively.

There have been attempts to be more involved in courses (shorter ones compared to the UPS course) in Shillong and Quito. Here too there would be a need to find approaches for greater collaboration.

The meeting of the Missions *Advisory Board* has continued on its regular two-year cycle, consolidating its methodology and offering in-depth studies of great validity and usefulness. As first fruits we can note the preparation of some confreres in missiology.

There has been improvement in accompaniment of the emerging reality of missionary Aspirantates in India.

Missionary animation

Work has been done to ensure that every Province has actually appointed a Provincial Delegate for Mission(ary) Animation (DIAM). There have been regional meetings for these DIAMs. Geographical division of animation by Sector members per region has been a positive step: Africa-America, South Asia, East Asia-Oceania and Europe. For the first time, all Regions now have their Regional Coordinator for Missionary Animation (CORAM), and almost all took part in the 2019 *Advisory Board* meeting for the Sector. The plan is that DIAM meetings per region will be held annually.

In January 2017 the Rector Major approved the DIAM handbook, an important tool for the delegate's identity and service.

Missionary prayer, inspired by the Holy Father's intentions, continues to be promoted every month. The prayer of the sick or elderly Salesians is promoted: every year, the Councillor sends them a letter explaining the apostolate of prayer and sacrifice..

Mission animation visits carried out by various collaborators in the Sector have had as their purpose to be close to the DIAMs and their teams, to missionary formation, accompaniment of missionaries *ad gentes*, promotion of the missionary vocation in the various phases of initial formation, the exchange with the Provincial and his Council, visiting the most significant missionary frontiers within Provinces, fostering close collaboration between Provinces with regard to common missionary projects, and so on.

With regard to the accompaniment of Apostolic Vicariates, Prefectures, Prelatures and Mission Delegations, initiatives are still insufficient to respond to their problems given the enormous diversity of contexts. There has been a lack of closer accompaniment, a careful study of the Conventions – existing or non-existent – between Provinces and these territories, between the Holy See and the Congregation.

To encourage the growth of a missionary culture in the Congregation, Salesian Mission Day (SMD) has been prepared each year. The material has been of quality and very much appreciated by the Provinces.

We have collaborated with *Propaganda Fidei* in animation of the extraordinary mission month (October 2019): the book on *Amazonia*, a special calendar, sharing audiovisual materials and so forth.

With regard to mission information, there is good collaboration with ANS and the Salesian Bulletin. After 11 years, *Cagliero11* continues with its monthly service of animation and is disseminated in at least 20 languages. There could be more shared involvement at the Province level between DIAMs and Delegates for Social Communication.

After a long journey, the Salesian Missionary Volunteer Handbook was approved in collaboration with Youth Ministry and printed in five languages. The Handbook seeks to offer a missionary approach to volunteer work and indicates the DIAM as the person responsible for the animation of volunteer work in the province. On a worldwide level, it is the responsibility of the Missions Sector to animate it through a Secretariat that has this purpose.

There have been significant steps forward at the level of synergy between the different Sectors, such as this one on volunteer work, greater coordination between the Mission Offices communications departments with the Social Communications Sector, and, as part of this collaboration, the production of the 'Terra di Missione' (Mission Lands) vocational films. There has been exchange and collaboration in missionary formation and the intention to respond together to the challenges of refugees and displaced persons. Some themes of particular missionary attention that require greater synergy between the Sectors are: refugees, parishes, first proclamation, catechesis and catechumenate, missionary associations and groups and movements, etc.

It is worth noting a pleasing synergy with the FMA Missions Department. This is expressed not only in the joint meetings once a semester, but especially in the seminars at the regional level that have been

held for about ten years, focused on First Proclamation. This reflection was very timely and urgent; but the theme was somewhat detached from the pastoral dynamics of the Provinces. In the future, we need to contextualise the themes more by involving other members of the Salesian Family.

With regard to knowledge and diffusion of the missionary figures of Salesian holiness something is being done through *Cagliero11*, retreats, missionary courses. There were conferences at the UPS on the subject of Bishop Fagnano, Fr Luigi Bolla and Fr Rodolfo Lunkenbein. Thought should be given to a greater diffusion of the biographies of missionaries whose cause for canonisation has been opened. The diaries of Fr Bolla and also the letters of Fr Cimatti, Fr Vendrame, and Fr Convertini have been published in eight volumes.

There is a degree of collaboration in research into the missions, through conferences at the UPS, exchange of information and the SMD. There is a need to prepare for the centenary of our missionary presence in Assam (2022) and the 150 years since the first Missionary Expedition (2025) by means of historical, theological, pastoral and spiritual studies.

The topic of refugees and displaced persons, being a sign of the times, requires strong animation, orientation and coordination. It is urgent to give an institutionalised response by the Congregation. The Mission Sector, together with the Youth Ministry Sector, is doing something in this regard. There is a need for a Secretariat which is competent in the matter. Some significant steps have been taken, such as the opening of a presence in Palabek (northern Uganda) among the refugees. A coordinated project regarding other presences among refugees would be important. We have a continuous presence in dialogue with the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Holy See's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

There is a need to create spaces and quality moments of reflection on theological, pastoral and animation trends in the missions. There are so many different ideas, and there is no little confusion regarding some concepts.: *Missio Dei*, *inter gentes–ad gentes*; first proclamation, catechumenal processes; the relationship between evangelisation, mission and ministry; mission-missions; mission territories; inter-religious dialogue and proclamation; the relationship between mission and inculturation; mission and human development, ecology, and so on and so forth. Some small but significant changes to the Constitutions and Regulations proposed by this Sector to the GC28 are in along these lines.

Mission solidarity

The only missionary project that has involved the whole Congregation, and therefore, which has made an explicit appeal to all the Provinces of the world in recent years, has been Project Europe. The Missions Sector in this six-year period was mainly involved in the third phase of the Project, that is, the sending, insertion and accompaniment of missionaries *ad gentes*, *ad vitam*, *ad exteros*.

The Missions Sector has been directly involved in Salesian foundations in two new countries: Malaysia, entrusted to the FIN Province, and Gambia, entrusted to the AFO Province in shared responsibility with the neighbouring AFW Province. In both cases the Missions Sector has seen to sending *ad gentes* personnel.

Some specific geographical areas required special attention in study and discernment, as was the case with *Services*. Others are expecting, probably from the Mission Sector itself in collaboration with the Regional Councillors involved, greater accompaniment and specific missionary reflection in order to create a more consolidated teamwork and apostolic fruitfulness. This would be the case, for example, with our presence in the Balkans.

In addition, over these six years the Missions Sector has begun to deal with specific contexts that have trans-regional implications, such as refugees and displaced persons, our presence in the Arab-Islamic world and among the indigenous Amazonian peoples. A vast study still remains to be done with reference to our presences in environments with a Christian-Orthodox majority.

The continuity of animation in the Congregation in the area of solidarity among Provinces has suffered a temporary setback, since no confrere within the Sector had this specific task over the final years of the previous six-year period or the first two years of this one.

There has been great collaboration and coordination between the Economist General's Office, the Missions Sector, the Mission Offices and the distribution commission set up by the Rector Major for the Solidarity Fund. Measures have been taken to improve the quality of projects and transparency in distribution. Tools have been developed to compare the support given to the Provinces over the years. This promotes greater equity. The frequency of meetings of the directors of the Congregation's Mission Offices has been increased from once to twice a year. We have experimented with broadening participation in these meetings to include some provincial or national Mission or Project and Development Offices. This has promoted mutual learning and greater solidarity. Some other Mission offices have also started to contribute to the Rector Major's Solidarity Fund. We have also held joint meetings of the directors of Salesian Mission Offices and Salesian NGOs (members of the Don Bosco Network - DBN). The DBN and the Missions Offices meet frequently at various events and working groups.

For several reasons, fundraising in traditional donor countries has become much more challenging. Several measures have been taken, including the use of the latest technologies and social media to expand the donor network. New solutions were discussed to meet the needs of the Congregation for the formation of confreres.

Over this six-year period guidance of Province Planning and Development Offices (PPDO) has shifted from the Missions Sector to the Economist General's Office. The Economist General, the Councillor for the Missions and DBN have collaborated closely in setting up PPDOs and developing their capacity in Provinces in Africa and Madagascar, Latin America and Asia. In the last six years, several capacity building projects have been carried out. The Economist General organised a world conference of PPDOs in Nairobi, with the support of the DBN and the Mission Offices. While there is a Coordinator for Mission Offices and a contact person for NGOs in the Congregation, there is a need for one appointed for PPDOs.

The coordinator of the Mission Offices made frequent visits to the Provinces and promoted the concepts of subsidiarity and self-sustainability of Provinces in the financial sector, and provided training where necessary. Local fundraising was initiated in several Provinces, in some as part of the work of their PPDO and in others through an independent Mission Office. This is demonstrated by the growth in the number of participants at the World Mission Office Conference: from 39 in 2012, to 64 in 2017 and to 89 (54 Provinces in 45 countries) in 2019. Collaboration and capacity building programs for local fundraising have been initiated at the regional level in Latin America, South Asia and East Asia. Progress has been made in clarifying the identity and role of the Mission Offices, the Salesian Code of Ethics and the spirituality of fundraising. Training was provided on the latest fundraising techniques such as digital marketing.

DBN has developed an online platform that provides data on projects, materials in response to emergencies, advocacy and volunteer initiatives. The platform has a specific section for the PPDOs, providing information and tools for capacity building and peer learning. There is greater collaboration between Mission Offices, DBN, PPDOs, the Social Communication Department and Salesian presences at the UN and EU for creating common brands.

The Youth Ministry Department, DBN, Mission Offices, Don Bosco International (DBI) and the Congregation's representation at the United Nations (SDB-UN) support and strengthen projects of *advocacy* in Salesian Family organisations. They collaborate in preparing policies, guidelines and specific interventions at local, regional and global levels.

Led by DBN, since 2014 the Congregation has a common policy and guideline (*Emergency Response Mechanism* – ERM) to provide effective support to disaster-affected Provinces. The Mission Offices Coordinator has been appointed as coordinator the Congregation's responses to emergencies.

The Missions Councillor is the ordinary link between the General Council and the DBN. The Councillor and the Coordinator of the Mission Offices are an integral part of the General Assembly, the Council and the DBN Working Groups. The Economist General and the Councillor for Youth Ministry regularly participate in the activities of the DBN. The DBN Statutes have been modified to strengthen the link between the DBN and the Salesian Congregation and its fidelity to the charism of Don Bosco.

For the future it might be desirable to strengthen the collaboration between the three international networks of PPDOs, Mission Offices and NGOs, involving the Missions and Economy Sectors. There is a need to substantially improve the material self-sustainability of all Salesian Provinces. There is a great possibility of improvement in the use of the resources that the Provinces already have, from the point of view of transparency, efficiency, responsibility, professional and ethical standards. Greater support could be given to strengthening the capacity building of regional networks of PPDOs, NGOs, Mission Offices and various Sectors. Much greater collaboration with the Social Communications Department is desirable to establish centralised ways and means of collecting and sharing Salesian data and material for the media, for free use by all Mission Offices, NGOs, PPDOs and Salesian websites, social media and the press. Along these lines, an autonomous Secretariat for the collection and updating in real time of data of all kinds and in all areas of the Congregation could be useful.

In conclusion, a strong sign and icon of mission in the Congregation was the new missionary crucifix that is given to the departing members in every Expedition. While on one side we see the Good Shepherd and our motto "*da mihi animas coetera tolle*", behind it is Jesus' missionary mandate in Mt. 18:19: "*euntes ergo docete omnes gentes baptizantes eos in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti*". May this mandate continue to be the central reason in the Congregation for our daily labours and our best dreams for the youth of today!