



### Dear missionaries and friends of the Salesian Missions,

I send you a fraternal greeting with the desire and commitment to see our charismatic identity strengthened within the Church with effective action among those most in need.

For this year we at the Sector for Missions propose *"Communicating Christ Today"* through Social Networks as the theme. It highlights the fact that reactivation of this mission must begin with each one, in one's own family and in the society. In union with the message that Pope Francis gave us *"that you may be my witnesses"* in the proclamation of the Gospel.

At the beginning of December, the month in which we celebrate the birth of the Savior, I would like to invite each one of who share the mission as members of the Salesian Family to continue to commit ourselves to the transformation of a more just, more fraternal, more evangelized society.

■ Fr. Hernán Darío Carmona López, SDB

Regional Coordinator for Missionary Animation, Inter-America Region

## The Missionary Strategy of St. Francis de Sales

During his missionary experience in the Chablais region of France (1594 – 1597), St. Francis de Sales developed his missionary strategy.

Firstly, **to be near the people** he accepted to live in the Chateau of Allinges accompanied only by his cousin. By choosing to walk down to Thonon every day, he met people in their ordinary daily life: workers in their shops, farmers in their fields and villagers in their homes. Thus, he established a simple personal relationship with them. Becoming their friend, his witness of life became even more appealing. This apostolate of relationship and friendship became the foundation of his missionary work..

Secondly, Francis of Sales **lived poor** and deprived of resources. He had little by way of human support. Although he was housed in the Chateau of Allinges as guest of the Baron of Hermance, he refused to preach the Gospel protected by the weapons of the Catholic army.

Thirdly, he placed **his hope in God alone**. His strength was in prayer and in the daily Mass at the small chapel of the Chateau before descending to Thonon. Even if he was insulted and mocked, even if the Protestants avoided or assailed him, he treated them with great respect and profound charity.

Fourthly, he was convinced of the **natural inclination to love** of every human heart. For Francis the missionary challenge was to help every person to believe, to receive the gift of faith, to believe in the existence of a God of love, incarnate in our humanity in Jesus, crucified for love of us, and resurrected so that we may enter fully into the communion of love with God.

Finally, he prepared himself well **to preach** with the same care for his rather small flock of faithful in the Chablais as he would for a crowd of the faithful. When people refused to listen to him, Francis **wrote pamphlets** and distributed them. Like the Protestants he also used Scriptures in his preaching and discussions with some of them.

Indeed, Francis evangelized above all, though his personal example of life – by way of his courage, his faith, his charity, and his preaching – that touched people's hearts and led to the conversion of many.

■ Fr. Alfred Maravilla, SDB

General Councillor for the Missions

### FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

- What can I learn from missionary strategy of St. Francis de Sales that is applicable in my context?
- What importance to I place to my personal witness of life?



# VOLUNTEERS IN MEXICO AND THE SALESIAN MISSION



*Dear Margarita, how would you define the current post-Covid situation of Salesian missionary volunteering in Mexico?*

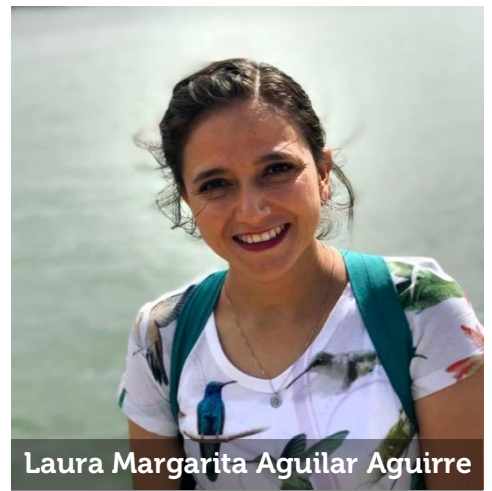
During the Covid pandemic, the Salesian Province of MEG decided not to suspend the experience of the Salesian Missionary Volunteer Service, and instead continued to prepare and send volunteers. Certainly, the number of volunteers has indeed decreased considerably. Now in the post-Covid situation, the MEG province continues to commit itself to experiences of service and witness that bring young people closer to God. For this we continue to prepare, train, and send volunteers to the Salesian communities. This year we have 15 volunteers in 5 communities.

*What do you think is the greatest benefit of the presence of international volunteers who come to help Mexico?*

The international volunteers that we receive enrich our communities through their culture, their way of living the Catholic religion and their Salesian joy. In certain aspects, we do find some similarities. But for the most part they are differences that complete the Salesian mission. On the other hand, the benefit that volunteers receive from the program is to meet God through the children, the adolescents and the young people of our houses, who live different realities from those that they are used to or do not know at all.

*As a woman and a lay person, what do you think can help the Salesians to better understand and support Salesian volunteering?*

First of all, by raising awareness of the importance of missionary animation in our communities. Furthermore, with formation through the materials and aids from the Salesian Missionary Volunteer Service. In our MEG Province we have decided to work on this programmatic line: to take care and ensure that every Salesian of Don Bosco lives his vocation happily and fraternally starting from the sacrament of presence, being among the children, adolescents and young people as a friend and an educator. Thus, they can be witnesses of God's love through accompaniment. We insist on the priority that the accompaniment of young people in its three phases must have: for those who are preparing to live the experience of volunteering, for young people who are doing volunteering and for young people who have already lived their experience of volunteering. Salesian missionary, never stops accompanying them.



**Laura Margarita Aguilar Aguirre**

Coordinator of the **Salesian Missionary Voluntary Service (SMVS)** of Guadalajara, Mexico.

She volunteered for a year in Nogales, northern **Mexico** and after this experience, she started in 2013 as a SMV coordinator within the **MEG** province, where she still works today. In the meantime, she has graduated in **pedagogy**.

Her duties include, among other things, the training and accompaniment of volunteers, organization of **formation** meetings, visits of volunteers to their communities.



## MURFO Volunteers: Most difficult times during their service

CULTURAL CHANGE	COMMUNITY LIFE	HOMESICKNESS
• Job 39,4 %	• Cohabitation 36,3 %	8,8 %
• Culture in general 37,2 %	• Salesians SDB 25,8 %	<b>SOLITUDE</b>
• Language 12,0 %	• Other volunteers 22,6 %	6,0 %
• Disease 8,0 %	• Individuals 9,7 %	
• Others 3,4 %	• Sisters FMA 5,6 %	Source: Thesis by Dr. Jc Montenegro

## DECEMBER SALESIAN MISSIONARY INTENTION

### Volunteer not-for-profit organisations

For the Salesian missionary volunteers and past volunteers in Mexico

We pray that volunteer non-profit organisations committed to human development find people dedicated to the common good and ceaselessly seek out new paths to international cooperation.  
[Pope Francis' prayer intention]

**MEXICO**  
