



Dear friends,

My name is Mateo del Blanco and I have been given charge of the National Delegation for Missionary Animation in Spain.

My Salesian life was centred on school and on educative-didactic tasks; the topic of Missions had only a minor presence in my day-to-day life. Being part of the Mission Office of Madrid and assuming this year the responsibility for the National Delegation, I am now fully immersed in this commitment. While I will try to do my best, I encourage those who are already involved, to continue to promote the Missions, each one in his own environment, as a means to live the Faith better in the monotony of daily life.

A fraternal embrace.

■ Fr. Mateo Del Blanco SDB
National Delegate for
Missionary Animation
in Spain

Our Commitment to Indigenous Peoples



For thousands of years indigenous peoples have followed ways of life that show great respect for creation. For them, land is a gift from the Creator and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. (*Laudato Si'*, 146). Their traditional beliefs, cultural practices and worldview express their **recognition of a Supreme Being**. Though some of their cultural practices and superstitions could demean human dignity, their many customs and traditions give great importance to social values which are centred on concern for others.

In the course of history numerous bishops, priests, religious and lay faithful gave even their lives in the defence of the dignity of indigenous peoples so that they may know Jesus Christ and his Gospel. However, it is a fact that injustice was done to them, at times, without opposition from religious leaders. Hence, "it is necessary to **acknowledge in all sincerity the abuses committed** due to the lack of love on the part of those persons who were unable to see the indigenous peoples as their brothers and sisters, as children of the same Father." (*St. John Paul II, Santo Domingo, 13 Oct 1992*).

Our concern for the indigenous peoples is not in support of any ideology nor lobby groups. It is rooted, instead, in our fundamental identity as created in the image and likeness of God which is deeper than any indigenous identity. The Church embraces indigenous peoples with their cultures so that they may discover the points of concurrence between their indigenous values and the traditions and the teachings of Jesus Christ. This dialogue teaches us to appreciate our inalienable **responsibility to preserve** our own environment, culture and traditions in the excellent manner they had done. They, in turn, are helped to discover the reflections of 'the ray of that Truth which enlightens all' (*Nostra Aetate, 2*) in their indigenous values, cultures and traditions.

Don Bosco sent his missionaries to the indigenous people of Patagonia. Today Salesians actively promote and preserve the identity of indigenous peoples by establishing cultural museums, writing dictionaries, grammars and other books. They promote programmes that foster their integral evangelisation. Indeed, our work among indigenous peoples is an important **expression of Salesian commitment** for the poor and marginalised.

■ Fr. Alfred Maravilla SDB
General Councillor for the Missions

FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

- What can I learn from indigenous peoples?
- How can we contribute to an integral evangelisation of indigenous peoples?



SICK CONFRESSES – LIVING EXAMPLES OF DON BOSCO



Dear Fr Antonio, what is the situation of the sick confreres in your house and how do you help them not to feel useless and unwanted?

Within the Salesian house of El Campello there is the El Mirador retirement home. There are currently 8 confreres that need all-day care. The house is run by a team of nurses, who work in three shifts, covering 24 hours a day.

We, the six active confreres in the community, interact very directly with our sick brothers in the El Mirador nursing home. Jesús takes care of pharmacy matters, visits to doctors and assistance in the hospital. Félix accompanies them daily on walks around the house, attending to their visitors. Manolo Bellver celebrates the Eucharist and prays with them daily. I, as the Rector, take care of the daily visits, conversations, listening and attending to their needs, together with the other confreres in the community. To make them feel active, we assign them specific tasks. When a confrere has his birthday, we all get together for dinner. We do this also at Christmas, Easter and major Salesian feasts.

What is the greatest contribution of the elderly and sick confreres to the Salesian mission?

We have always maintained - and we know this from direct experience - that sick confreres have given their whole life for the Congregation, have given themselves body and soul, and have contributed to the growth of the Salesian presence in the Province, wherever they have been part of Salesian communities. They are confreres with a great missionary trajectory: they have aroused vocations, accompanied young people in their growth in the faith, and continue to be authentic living examples of Don Bosco through their presence.

How can we learn to accept ageing, our limitations and our inabilities?

Being part of this Salesian presence, with a small community of confreres living with other sick Salesians, is a blessing, a reward that the Lord grants us. I learn a lot through my daily life with them and, without a doubt, it is a real school that teaches us how to be elderly, sick and dependent on others. These are lessons that our brothers offer us every day, without losing heart, with Christian hope, always offering their personal situation to God the Father.



Fr. Antonio Zaragosa SDB

Born in **Benijófar (Alicante)** in Spain. My Salesian life is due to (late) Fr. Florencio Celdrán, a Salesian from my town, who encouraged my vocation.

I was an aspirant in this same house in El Campello.

On 30 May 1987 I was ordained a priest at **Valencia**. I was part of the groups of coordination in school pastoral care and youth centres.

I served also as delegate in various associations of Mary Help of Christians and the Salesian Cooperators. Currently

I am the **Rector of the El Campello house** and delegate of the Salesian Cooperators.

Average age of Salesians

| Regions | Salesians & Novices | Average age |
|------------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Africa - Madagascar | 2.019 | 37,9 |
| America South Cone | 1.118 | 55,2 |
| East Asia - Oceania | 1.422 | 49,2 |
| South Asia | 2.997 | 44,2 |
| Central & North Europe | 1.948 | 58,8 |
| Interamerica | 1.451 | 56,6 |
| Mediterranean | 2.362 | 67,2 |
| RMG - UPS | 183 | 59,7 |
| Total | 13.500 | 53,6 |

F O R U M

Updated: 19.12.2023 • Source: Central Salesian Archive



FEBRUARY SALESIAN MISSIONARY INTENTION

For the terminally ill

For the elderly and seriously ill Salesians in Spain



We pray the people who are terminally ill, and their families, that they may always receive the necessary care and accompaniment, both from a medical and a human point of view.

[Prayer intention of Pope Francis]