



### Blessings!

This year of hope has given me time to reflect on the blessing it has been to animate the vocation ministry in the United States and Canada. All throughout our province, I am witnessing young people who are passionate about their faith and are willing to give their lives in generous service. They have a strong desire to live in intentional communities, to deepen their prayer life and to become authentic Christian missionary disciples.

It fills me with hope and encourages me to continue to draw close to the young and to walk side by side as they discern their vocation. This is the adventure of life that I believe Don Bosco lived and wants all of us to live as a Salesian Family. It is beautiful to be a pilgrim and walk together with young people!

● Fr Steve DeMaio SDB  
Delegate for Vocation  
Ministry, SUE Province

## Humble worker in the vineyard of the Lord, not Lord of the harvest



We have come to the end of my mandate as General Councillor for the Missions. It is an opportune opportunity 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 revitalizes.

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 realizing that we can't 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 lords of the Harvest; **servant-leaders, not messiahs.**

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, the Provincial Delegates for Missionary Animation and the members of the Advisory Teams for the SMV, the Mission Offices and the Missionary Museums, for our wonderful collaborative ministry in promoting the missionary spirit and commitment throughout our Society (C 138).

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. I ask the capitulars to 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!*

● Fr Alfred Maravilla SDB  
General Councillor  
for the Missions



# LIKE JESUS – ACCOMPANYING YOUNG PEOPLE ON THEIR DAILY JOURNEY



*Dear Fr Martin, as novice master in Poprad, Slovakia, you can clearly see the decline in vocations to consecrated life in Europe, even in areas that were once prosperous. Do you consider the "crisis" of SDB and FMA vocations in Europe primarily as a problem or also as an opportunity? What role can "missionary courage" play?*

It depends on what we mean by decline. If we refer purely to numbers, then yes, we can talk about decline. However, I don't think this is the way the God of the Bible prefers to reason. Recall how God did not like King David to count his military forces. God's call to consecrated life continues to exist, regardless of the numbers. Rather, the crucial element is the authenticity with which the people who have been called live their vocation. Without this authenticity, there is a risk of offering inappropriate testimonies that become a "stumbling block" for others.

The current challenge is also linked to Jesus' words on the "narrow way": the religious vocation has never been an easy choice and today accepting life as a life-long call seems particularly distant from contemporary mentality. On the other hand, a "seasonal" love has never been accepted as true love – authentic love endures, and that is precisely what we are called to. The decline in the number of vocations therefore mainly reflects a crisis of values and the ability to make decisions that involve personal sacrifice. We live in an era characterized by an exasperated search for self-realization and self-affirmation. In this context, "missionary courage" consists above all in the ability to go out of oneself to discover that in addition to the "I" there are the "you" and the "we".

*What is the importance of Salesian vocation animators or delegates for whom we are praying this month?*

I observe that in many youth centres our pastoral care seems to focus mainly on commitment to young people. However, our Constitutions clearly indicate that the culmination of youth ministry is vocational orientation. If this change of perspective from "simple commitment" to vocational orientation does not take place, we run the risk of our works being reduced to mere social centres. In this context, Salesian vocation animators have an extraordinary opportunity: that of guiding young people to understand their own life as a vocation, in dialogue with God, in the different conditions of life.

For me, the Salesian vocation animator needs to live among the young, fully present to them – he is not a bureaucrat who stays behind a desk, but a person who concretely shares life with them and, like Jesus, literally accompanies them on their daily journey.



**Fr Martin Kačmár SDB**

I am from Košice, **Slovakia**. I am in my fourth year as **novice master in Poprad, Slovakia**. I am also Rector of the Salesian house. I have served as the head of youth ministry, director of the prenovices, and also as the Rector. During my ongoing formation, I followed the course for formators at the UPS. I also studied Salesian spirituality and the intersection of Eastern and Western spirituality at the **Aletti Centre in Rome**.



M J U N I O R F O R								
Number of Catholics per priest (diocesan and religious)								
Country	No. of Catholics per priest	Total number of Catholics	Country	No. of Catholics per priest	Total number of Catholics			
Cuba	21,170	6,330,000	United Kingdom	847	4,787,000			
Angola	16,378	10,302,000	India	852	17,005,000			
Honduras	13,885	5,790,000	Ireland	887	4,161,000			
Nicaragua	12,439	5,212,000	Italy	1,150	57,665,000			
Sudan	11,041	4,019,000	Poland	1,230	35,010,000			
Burundi	10,499	4,567,000	USA	1,439	64,621,000			
Peru	10,170	28,160,000	Spain	1,470	37,165,000			

Source: [www.catholic-hierarchy.org](http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org)

## FEBRUARY SALESIAN MISSIONARY INTENTION

### RETHINK > VOCATION

SALESIAN INTENTION:

We pray for renewed missionary courage so that all Salesians can be close to young people in their vocational discernment

Prayer intention of Pope Francis > *For vocations to the priesthood and religious life*

