



Missionary Re-reading of GC 27

*material
for reflection
in communities
and Provinces*

Sector for Missions
2015

PRESENTATION

**To the PDMA
of the Provinces**

January 31, 2015

Dear Province Delegate for Missionary Animation,
Dear confreres,

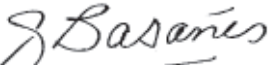
It has been almost a year since the conclusion of the GC27, an intense moment of the Spirit, an intense moment for the Congregation.

Pope Francis never tires of telling us that we need to “wake up the world.” The danger is that we fall asleep! “*If salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?*” (Mt 5,13). And a nice way to fall asleep is to forget. To forget what the Spirit told us! To forget our General Chapters!

These brief pages aim at helping the PDMA and each confrere to keep alive the missionary flame of the GC27, to obey, as good Salesian apostles, its exhortations and implement them with courage and creativity.

In doing this we shall, at the same time, do a Salesian re-reading of *Evangelii Gaudium* of Pope Francis. So, far from forgetting the GC27, we want, as Salesians of Don Bosco, to live intensely this time of missionary renewal of the whole Church. The questions offered at the end of this booklet and many other questions that will certainly arise in the mind of confreres and communities, can - if taken seriously! - cause a real revolution in our houses and works.

May the missionary saints of the Salesian Family inspire and support us!


Fr. Guillermo Basañes SDB
Councillor for the Missions

INTRODUCTION

The Sector for the Missions seeks to reflect on the missionary implications of the final document of the GC27 to help the confreres live their Salesian consecrated life in a permanent state of mission.¹ May this reflection trigger in every Salesian the spark which leads to creativity in proclaiming the Gospel [4,54]² as well as an ongoing spiritual, fraternal and pastoral conversion [26,63]. This missionary re-reading is being done in the light of art. 30 of our Constitutions which stresses that missionary work is an essential feature of our Congregation which mobilizes all the educative and pastoral means proper to our charism. And also of art. 138 which specifies the responsibility of the Councillor for the Missions to promote the missionary spirit and commitment throughout the whole Society, coordinate and direct missionary activities and ensure the adequate preparation of Salesian missionaries.

During the capitular debates as well as in its final document, the GC27 made constant reference to the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* of Pope Francis. Hence, this missionary re-reading of the GC27 needs to be done simultaneously with the Salesian reading and appropriation of the Apostolic Exhortation. This material prepared by the Sector for the Missions intends to foster the missionary reception and study of the GC27

SALESIAN LIFE “PERMANENTLY IN A STATE OF MISSION”

As a Congregation which goes forth in a Church without frontiers and whose doors are wide open,³ **this missionary re-reading is synthesised in the need for every Salesian to rediscover the missionary dimension of his Salesian vocation** in order to reach out to others [7], and above all towards new frontiers and existential peripheries [22]. This demands overcoming our ‘self-referentiality’ and the lack of missionary boldness [2] which is seen in the

¹ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 25.

² The numbers in bold refer to the final document of GC 27, in AGC 418.

³ Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 20-24, 46, 210.

feeling of fatigue, tension, fragmentation, inefficiency and *burnout* [27]. To this end, it is necessary to move from a life marked by a middle class lifestyle to one that is missionary and prophetic [74.1] and live our Salesian life *permanently in a state of mission* as missionary disciples.⁴ Here we recall the statement of St. John Paul II: “All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion.”⁵

It is especially crucial that Salesians are helped to understand that today mission cannot be seen only in geographic or unidirectional terms. Mission is primarily the proclamation of Jesus Christ in three interpenetrating contexts, where either the mission *ad gentes*, ordinary pastoral activity or new evangelisation is required.⁶ In the light of *Project Europe* it is essential to help all Salesians to appreciate the multidirectional movement of missionaries from all continents to all continents as a concrete sign of the fruitfulness of the *missio ad gentes*.⁷ In this new context, the Sector for the Missions continues to play a role in ensuring, coordinating and guiding missionary options [43] on the new frontiers and in existential peripheries and in promoting the missionary projects of the Congregation [75.5]. Through this service it becomes the “sentinel of the new frontiers” for the Congregation.

To go beyond the pastoral work of ordinary maintenance⁸ and the tomb psychology which causes interior fatigue and pastoral acedia,⁹ Pope Francis insists on the missionary option that drives us from the tendency of self-preservation to pastoral conversion. In this way, all our pastoral aspirations become the proper means to reach out to others without fear, to take the initiative and to go out to the peripheries of human existence.¹⁰ In fact, the GC27 has made its own nos. 27 and 49 of *Evangelii Gaudium* in which Pope Francis dreams of a mission-

⁴ Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 24, 25.

⁵ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Oceania*, 19.

⁶ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 33-34.

⁷ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, 167.

⁸ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, 95.

⁹ Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 82-83.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 24-27, 46.

ary option and insists that he prefers “a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security” [43]. The missionary commitment impels us, then, to live our faith and religious consecration with joy and authenticity [67.1]. Indeed, missionary enthusiasm cannot but foster the joy of evangelisation!¹¹

As seekers of God [32], at the centre of our journey are the Eucharist [41] and the Word of God, the sources of the Church’s mission. The daily Eucharist and love for the Word and familiarity with it through the *lectio divina* help us to give primacy of God in our lives [65], keep alive our motivations of faith [54], our Gospel inspired ways of thinking [9] and to discover the beauty and urgency to proclaim the Gospel. This proclamation fills us with missionary joy¹² and at the same time, it renews us in the knowledge that its content is the Kingdom of God (cf. *Mk* 1,14-15), which is the very person of Jesus.¹³

Since the real missionary is a saint,¹⁴ that is, a mystic in the Spirit [33], it is necessary to deepen Salesian missionary spirituality more systematically [35] in a way that enlightens the connection between spiritual life and pastoral charity [6]. The stable spiritual accompaniment [67.2] of missionaries plays an important role in helping to rediscover the attraction for Jesus and the intense desire to share him with joy and overcome the interior fatigue which weakens the apostolic dynamism of every missionary¹⁵.

FROM MULTICULTURALITY TO INTERCULTURALITY!

The option of the Chapter to foster our being mystics of fraternity [40] and our international communities through a worldwide redistribution of confreres [75.5] are a clear sign of the universality of the

¹¹ Ibid, 79.

¹² Ibid, 21.

¹³ Cf. *Verbum Domini*, 92, 93.

¹⁴ Cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, 90.

¹⁵ Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 81, 83, 264.

Church and the Salesian charism. But the discussions in the Chapter Hall insisted that one cannot just be contented with the internationality of our communities. Multiculturalism should aim at interculturality [29] which comprises mutual respect and openness between Salesians of different nations as an essential condition for real exchange and mutual enrichment. In this sense it is important that new missionary presences are made up of confreres from different nationalities in order to promote the inculturation of the faith and of the Salesian charism and to avoid that they be expressed only in their particular cultural expressions. Interculturality is what makes our multicultural reality a real prophetic fraternity! In this light, it is essential that new missionaries *ad gentes, ad exteros, ad vitam* be prepared for interculturality and experience community life in an international community. At the same time, it is necessary that the lived experience of internationality of the Congregation be an integral part in formation courses for missionaries. The knowledge and practice of the document *The Missionary Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco* is a contribution to the formation of Salesians to interculturality and in linking initial formation to pastoral processes [21].

EVANGELISE!

To evaluate the evangelising value of our educative pastoral activities and not be regarded only as an NGO or as social workers, it is essential to foster in every Salesian the experience of faith and a personal encounter with Jesus [38]. In this way he rediscovers the joy of believing and proclaiming Him, and maintains a life full of passion [66] for Him and His people.¹⁶ Since evangelisation is essentially an encounter with the person of Jesus,¹⁷ it is intimately connected with the proclamation to those who do not know Him or have always refused Him.¹⁸ So it is only right to remind ourselves that “there is no true evangelisation if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God,

¹⁶ Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 268.

¹⁷ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 1

¹⁸ Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 15.

are not proclaimed.”¹⁹ In this light, the Sector for the Missions and that of Youth Ministry ought to help the Provinces in fostering the development of the vocational and missionary dimension of young people and foster the growth of missionary groups within the Salesian Youth Movement so that they become an authentic experience of an encounter with Christ [17]. In this sense, the formation of volunteers before sending them off, their accompaniment during their voluntary service and the reflection after their service are crucial.

The Sector for the Missions also sees the urgent need of preparing in all Regions experts in missiology, anthropology, and interreligious dialogue. It would be opportune that Provincials send suitable confreres to specialise in these fields. Such specialisations will help us better understand the different cultural contexts of today, above all those of the young [24], in which the sense of God manifests itself in many ways [2]. Similarly, cultural and inter-religious dialogue as well as a sharing of significant pastoral experiences ought to be fostered [61] in view of a better proclamation of Jesus Christ to everyone.

In synergy with the Sectors for Social Communication, Youth Ministry and Formation, it is essential to rediscover the importance and relevance of the initial proclamation in all our pastoral activities. In this way the *Study Days* during the previous six year period can be deepened and applied. Initial proclamation is the key for a better enlightenment of the strategies to accompany young people in knowing and encountering Christ [18], promoting our missionary presence in the digital world [25, 75.4] and among migrants and refugees [55], rediscovering the Preventive System as a proposal of evangelisation [58], and underlining the inseparable bond between education and evangelisation [18].

The parish is “a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach.”²⁰ Therefore, it is necessary to foster the missionary spirit of Salesian parishes paying special attention to initial proclamation. The maintenance of communities working on the “frontiers” [69.5] takes place through a deeper sense of fraternity and solidarity [29], also

¹⁹ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 22.

²⁰ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 28.

through the coordination and guidance of the *Mission Offices* and the *Development and Planning Office* (PDO) in collaboration with the Economist General's office.

To deepen the missionary commitment and activity of the whole Congregation there is a need of prayers and sacrifices so that the proclamation of the Word will be effective through divine grace.²¹ The presence of old and sick confreres [11,69.4] is a spiritual force for the missions on the frontiers of the Congregation. In this light, the monthly missionary intention is a tool that can help this missionary prayer circle throughout the Congregation.

The growth of collaboration with the Salesian family [69.1] is a stimulus to broaden horizons and expand the heart of our apostolic mission [19]. At Province and local level it is necessary that each Province Delegate for Missionary Animation (*PDMA*) programmes initiatives in synergy with other sectors in the animation of the Province and discerns ways of working with the Salesian Family. With all the members of the Salesian Family it is urgent to search with generous openness for opportunities of collaboration and coordination in missionary activities, initiatives towards new frontiers and existential peripheries [22,44],²² occasions of ongoing formation of missionaries and reflection on current issues in missiology.

²¹ Ibid, 262; Cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, 78.

²² Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 210.

LET US ENTRUST OURSELVES TO MARY!

We entrust this material for use in our communities and Provinces to Mary, making our own the prayer of St. John Paul II:²³



*Mary, Mother of hope,
accompany us on our journey!
Teach us to proclaim the living God;
help us to bear witness to Jesus, the one Saviour;
make us kindly towards our neighbours,
welcoming to the needy,
concerned for justice,
impassioned builders of a more just world;
intercede for us as we carry out our work in history,
certain that the Father's plan will be fulfilled!
Amen.*

²³ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, Conclusion.

FOR REFLECTION

1. *The missionary spirit is an essential dimension of our Salesian charism. How do we live our Salesian life “permanently in a state of mission’ in the context of the work entrusted to our community?*
2. *Living and working together, despite our coming from different countries and cultures, is a powerful sign in our world, torn by ethnic and religious conflicts. What signs do we see in our community that project our multicultural Congregation as a true prophecy of interculturality?*
3. *We are evangelisers of young people not social services providers nor NGOs. Is our educative-pastoral activity truly evangelising, - that is, a proclamation of Jesus Christ - in the territory where we are present?*
4. *Initial proclamation is not a method nor a programme, but a way of life of the entire Christian and Salesian community that stirs up an interest in knowing the person of Jesus Christ among those who do not yet know Him, among those who, have known but abandoned Him, and among those who live their faith in a routine manner. How do we make use of the opportunities for initial proclamation in our setting together with the whole educative-pastoral community and the Salesian Family?*
5. *Prayer for the missions renews us and strengthens the missionary activities of our Society. Do we make use of the opportunity offered to our community every 11th of the month to strengthen the prayer circle and experience the internationality of the Salesian Society?*
6. *The annual Salesian Mission Day helps us to think beyond our works and feel part of our Society that is actively working in the frontiers in all continents. How do we celebrate the annual SMD with our educative-pastoral community?
How do we celebrate it in our Province?*



