

## Salesian Missionary Animation in Youth Pastoral Work

**Missionary animation is an integral part of Salesian pastoral work for the young**, and hence an essential element in all parts of the Salesian educative and pastoral project (PEPS).

- ❑ It *pervades* and *gives dynamism* to youth pastoral work, bringing in confreres, youth groups and members of the Salesian Family.
- ❑ In communion with youth pastoral work, it must be present in the overall educative and pastoral project:
  - in the contents, concentrating decisively on the commitment to first evangelization;
  - in style, encouraging openness to a 'universal Church' mentality, quality of interreligious and ecumenical dialogue, and availability for practical solidarity;
  - in choosing those to whom we direct our work, renewing the decisive option for poor and needy Youth 42
- ❑ A well targeted missionary animation
  - accentuates in youth pastoral work the priority of first evangelization through *the witness of life, the explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ, and the sense of the universality of the Church*
  - mobilizes all the educative and pastoral features typical of our charism in their support of the work of "patient evangelization and foundation of the Church";44
  - enhances youth pastoral work by giving it a horizon, an objective and a special sensitivity for the universal dimension of ecclesial praxis:
  - Illumines the process of education to the faith and of introduction to salesian youth spirituality through the setting of goals, objectives, attitudes and missionary experiences capable of leading young people back to the roots of the faith, and bringing them to see the significance and joy of self-giving for others; 45
  - opens the hearts of the young and of communities to the great problems, of humanity, and develops in them the capacity for dialogue with other cultures, religions, and groups belonging to ethnic minorities ;46
  - Stirs up in the young enthusiasm for the faith, which makes of them credible witnesses and proclaimers,4' provoking in them a strong requirement concerning their own life style and their ability to commit themselves:
    - in the volunteer movement or in groups of missionary animation;
    - in the acceptance and education of persons of different origin, race, faith and culture, immigrants and refugees, children who are isolated and at risk ; 48
    - in the evangelization of those who do not yet know Jesus Christ and are waiting for the first proclamation of salvation; 49

42 cf. VIS, *Camminare insieme*, 1993, 4.

43 cf. AMS p. 14; EN 80.

44 cf. C 30.

45 cf. EMI) ch.2 & 3, pp. 22-41.

46 cf. R 18; GC24, 183

47 cf. GC23, 93.

48 cf. VECCHI LE., AGC 359, pp.28-30 .

49 cf. EN 72; RM 34; GC23, 93.

Missionary animation and youth pastoral work, therefore, orient young people to a comprehensive love of life, open to culture and ideals, to sharing and solidarity, capable of the courage to dream as did Don Bosco of new worlds and new people. 50

### **Salesian Missionary Animation and Vocational Pastoral Work**

"In the salesian pedagogy of faith the vocational option is the mature and indispensable result of all human and Christian growth". 51

- An authentic missionary animation has the task of presenting the missionary vocation within vocational pastoral work, by helping the young to "discover their own niche in the building of the Kingdom and to will it with joy and determination",<sup>52</sup> and to give a unique sense to their own existence: "to make of it an acknowledgement of the absolute greatness of God and a response to his love". 53
- The missionary reality continually opens new horizons and reveals frontier zones where man's future is at stake. For this reason it has a strong motivating power for jolting consciences and stirring up generous responses of vocational commitment.
- Within youth pastoral work and in its privileged relationship with vocational pastoral work, Missionary Animation presents the particular aspect of the missionary vocation (lay, religious and priestly) as the greatest freely given response of a person to the Lord's call.
- Missionary animation and vocational pastoral work, moreover, find common ground in the education of the young to values, attitudes and involvement, such as:
  - the gratuitous nature of service in places which are humble, uncomfortable and difficult;
  - the sense of the worldwide aspect;
  - total self-donation in medium and long-term experiences of volunteer missionary work;
  - the capacity for openness and dialogue with persons from other cultures and different religious convictions;
  - generous commitment in service to the very poor and to those who have not yet received the revelation of God's love;
  - the desire to give a permanent and generous response to the mission ad gentes. 54
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- "There is no testimony without witnesses, just as there is no mission without missionaries,,. 55 The common commitment between the two sectors of missionary animation and vocational pastoral work finds its best expression in the care and development of missionary vocations in the strict sense: "Such a 'special vocation' is not something that makes them exceptional in respect of other confreres, but rather a more lively and generous expression of the vocation of all" . 56
- "Do all you can to foster vocations for both the Sisters and the Salesians" . 57 "The Salesians go to the missions to stay there. Their commitment, while respecting the seasons of the Lord of the harvest, is characterized by an immediate rendering indigenous of the Congregation. This requires an adequate inculturation in vocational discernment, and the special following up of candidates from ethnic minorities' . 58

50 cf. VIGANÒ E., in EMI) p.36.

51 GC23, 149; cf. e 37.

52 GC23, 150.

53 GC23, 156. 28.

54 RM 65.

55 RM

56 VIGANÒ E., o. e. p. 11.

57 Don Bosco's Collected Letters, IV, Letter 2556. SEI, Turin, p.332<sup>58</sup>. ODORICO L., o.c. p.S.

- Finally, missionary animation strengthen the faith and vocation of those who engage in it. In recent decades there has been noticed a connection, which is not fortuitous, between missionary commitment and renewal of Religious Life: "It is in the missions in fact that one experiences more clearly that the Gospel is the precious 'good news' for the present day, and that the faith of the confreses themselves becomes reawakened as they proclaim the events of Christ" .<sup>59</sup> 'Faith is strengthened when it is given to others".<sup>60</sup>

In the light of all we have said about salesian missionary animation, the following **OBJECTIVES** emerge:

- **To promote interest in the missions ad gentes in the educative and pastoral community.**
- **To foster the formation of all members of the EPC in witness of life and to the commitment to radiate and communicate their own faith.**
- **To propose ways of practical realization to facilitate in the educative community the commitment for the missions ad gentes.**

## THE PROVINCIAL DELEGATE FOR MISSIONARY ANIMATION

### *Identity and tasks*

#### 1. The identity of the Provincial Delegate for Missionary Animation 61

- The Provincial Delegate for Missionary Animation is the witness to and promoter of the Province's commitment to the mission ad gentes.
- "To live and work together is for us Salesians a fundamental requirement and a sure way of fulfilling our vocation".<sup>62</sup> To be a true work o evangelizacion, missionary animation is of its nature communal. The DIAM must be aware of this and strive to work in harmony with all the oher organism of provincial animation.
- His deep ecclesial sense makes him a person capable of the efficacious organization of various initiatives, which can create a healthy missionary concern within pastoral work, to urge it to get out of its hidebound horizons and point to new ones.
- The DIAM, like every Salesian, "accepts responsibility for his own formation".<sup>63</sup> In addition to this personal qualities and talents, he will try to acquire other skills, e.g.: Knowledge of interreligious and intercultural contexts, the ability to communicate and to conduct reflections on missionary facts.

<sup>59</sup> VIGANÓ E., o.c. p.35

<sup>60</sup> RM 2. 30;

<sup>61</sup> For this chapter we refer the reader in particular to: MELIDA A., *La figura del Delegado inspectorial para la Animación misionera: responsabilidades, competencias, método*, in *Animación Misionera Salesiana, Primer encuentro de Delegados Inspectoriales de América Latina*. Lima – 1991. Rome, 1991. La propuesta pastoral de la Animación Misionera Salesiana. Delegación Nacional Salesiana de Pastoral Juvenil. Madrid, 1991.

<sup>62</sup> C49

<sup>63</sup> C99

## The tasks of the Provincial Delegate for Missionary Animation

To attain the objectives indicated in the preceding chapter, the Provincial Delegate assumes the task of translating them into strategies and interventions in the provincial programming of his own sector.

The tasks which derive from this first objective are:

- **To bear witness to his own faith** by observing the options and motivations which prompt us to assume a certain style of life.

What qualifies animation is not only the practical details but the ability to put across, through the eloquent language of his own existence, the values he wants to transmit and the experience in which he wants to involve those he is addressing: “*One is a missionary first of all through what one is, before being so through what he says or does*”; 64

- **To promote information and the knowledge of missionary activity** in the cultural and social contexts of other peoples, with regard to the possibilities and difficulties met with in evangelization and the work of the missionaries. 65 And so it will be useful:

- ❖ to set up a provincial **Documentation Centre**, or database, make it available for initiatives of missionary animation, and encourage its use within the educative community as a source of information;
- ❖ to encourage **an updated knowledge of experiences of missionary life in the Church and in the Congregation** through provincial newsletters, local Salesian Bulletins, and in particular through the “good night” ( or the “good morning”) on the 11<sup>th</sup> of each month, recalling the first missionary expedition; 66
- ❖ to foster the production of *publications and audiovisuals*, the setting up of *mini-projects*, and subscriptions to easy consultation of *missionary reviews*;
- ❖ to promote in particular way the production of teaching aids concerning *themes of development, worldwide attitudes, and interreligious dialogue*;
- ❖ to collaborate with **missionary organism of the local Church** for a reciprocal enrichment as regards information, formation and the joint realization of activities.

- **Maintain contact with missionaries of one’s own Province, or those passing through.** This implies:

- ❖ Letting the local communities of the Province know in good time when there are missionaries passing through, so that they can invite them as *living and eloquent witnesses of the mission ad gentes*, so that by telling the story of their decision ad vitam, they may communicate the joy of their self-giving, pass on the search for truth, and provide authoritative documentation of transforming power of the Gospel. 67

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64 RM 23; cf. GC24, 151; VIGANÒ E., o.c. p.35

65 cf. AMS, p. 16

66 To this end use can be made of materials already existing, e.g. those of the VIS (International Volunteer Movement for Development) via Appia Antica, 124, 00179 Rome.

67 cf. VECCHI J.E., o.c. p. 297.

- ❖ Programming with them at provincial level meetings, forums, days of missionary formation, etc.;
  - ❖ Keeping missionary confreres of Province informed about *courses of missiology* and sessions of missionary formation in the various Study Centres and Universities, and about meetings for formation and verification organized for resident missionaries;
  - ❖ Knowing and keeping *contact with the families of missionaries* of the Province, organizing meetings with them and the Salesian Family for the sharing of ideals and missionary information.
- Revive **the sense of belonging to the one mission of the Church and the Congregation.** For this purpose, the Delegate will take care to form and inform the confreres and Groups of the Salesian Family in the Province on:
- Reflections, proposals and eventual directives coming from the Centre of the Congregation:
    - Letters of the Rector Mayor about the Missions;
    - Initiatives, publications and guidelines from the Councillor for the Missions and his Department.
    - Projects for development proposed for the World and Salesian Mission Days.
    - Proposals for ongoing formation of missionaries at world level.
  - Initiatives of missionary formation coordinated with the youth pastoral team and other branches of the Salesian Family, in particular those of a missionary character and those involving responsible involvement in strategies in areas most at risk or great social need.
  - Manifestations, celebrations and ecclesial gatherings of a missionary kind, particularly those of national branch of the Pontifical Missionary Union, of other missionary Congregations, the national and diocesan Caritas organization, local committees for justice and peace, etc.

**Fostering the formation of all members of the EPC, so that they can give living witness, and spread and communicate their own faith.**

The information on missionary activity goes beyond satisfying curiosity and occasional interest. It stimulates a universal outlook, educates to reflection on the significance of facts, problems and cultures which are interrelated, and throws light on the perception of the religious experience present in peoples as a universal search for the absolute even to the understanding of history in which God is present as guide. 68

In the formation sector, the task of the DIAM extend to both the contents the ways they can be accessed:

- **Formation of a missionary awareness ad gentes**, such that each one will know he has been sent to radiate his own faith and feel an interior force compelling him to communicate

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cf. ID, p.296

the others the reason for his hope: “An obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel”.

- 69 For this purpose use should be made of the outstanding parts of the liturgical year, the missionary month of October, the salesian world missions day (DOMISAL), missionary departures, etc.

- See to it that programs of initial and ongoing formation of the EPC, **specific themes of systematic missiology** are included, e.g. the mission of the Church, approach to ecumenism, interreligious dialogue and inculturation, history of the salesian mission, typical missionary figures, etc.
- **Emphasize the explicit missionary catechetical content** in process of the education of young people to the faith, and in particular:

The urgency of the Kingdom, the universal call of men to salvation, the mission of the Church to be the “sign and instrument” of such a vocation in the world, learning the “ways of the mission: *poverty, meekness, acceptance of suffering and persecutions, the desire for justice and peace, in other words the Beatitudes, lived in apostolic life.*” 70

- Foster **initiatives of solidarity** aimed at creating new ethical models of behaviour, because “faith without works is dead”. 71
- **Propose a spiritual process of ongoing conversion by comparing one’s personal life with the paschal kerigma:** such an attitude is essential for every kind of new evangelization, by making one’s witness a free and joyful presentation of the faith. For this purpose it will be useful to organize days of missionary spirituality or retreats animated by missionaries or by specialists in missiology.

**Propose practical ways for facilitating in the educative community the making for a commitment to the missions ad gentes.**

Communication and formation to the missionary dimension ad gentes is based on concrete proposals and structures for creating and sustaining attitudes of ecclesial membership, and of service and commitment to the missions. And so the Provincial Delegate for Missionary Animation will have the task of:

- **Drawing up** and presenting to the EPC a *simple, realistic and concrete* **PROJECT FOR MISSIONARY ANIMATION**. Such a project:
  - ❖ Will be integrated into (and not merely joined to) the Salesian Educative and Pastoral Project at provincial and local level 72 to provide a re-reading from the standpoint of the missions ad gentes.
  - ❖ Will be able to put forward and verify obligations, activities and experience of openness and mentality of the universal Church, by educating to attitudes of freely given service and long term commitment in frontier mission work.
  - ❖ Will take account of the indications of the Document “Educating to the Missionary Dimension” in both the elaboration of the above-mentioned Project and in meetings for missionary youth movement.

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69 1 Cor 9,16; cf. 1 Pt 3,15; AMS, p.17.

70 RM 91; cf. Mt 5,1-12.

71 Jas 2,17 .

72 cf. EMD, pp. 45-46.

- **Fostering the creation and development of missionary groups**, ensuring that:
  - They work within the *Salesian Youth Movement* to keep alive in the young people and animators the awareness, openness and ability to respond to the most needy sectors of their own geographical area, and towards work on the frontiers of the mission ad gentes 74
  - They have a specific formation based on the contents of the mission ad gentes, even though they may have to assume different time, forms and deadline, in accordance with local requirements. They can be developed as:
    - Groups for reflection and study, to analyze more deeply the information they receive and make better known the missionary activity of the universal Church, cultures and religions of peoples far away and immigrants, dangerous, frontier contexts where the missionaries are most at risk, etc.
    - Working groups to coordinate the realization of specific projects and mini-objectives, maintaining contacts with persons or countries and spreading knowledge of their concrete reality. 75

“The reawakening of missionary awareness *to obtain new levels of faith and commitment* is typical of groups and movements which have a specific interest for the missions, the development of peoples, and international collaboration: *missionary experience then becomes transformed into a process of growth and maturing in the faith*”. 76

- **Encouraging and developing the salesian missionary volunteer movement** within the overall volunteer movement promoted by the Province. 77

For this he DIAM, in agreement with the Provincial Delegate for the Volunteer Movement, must:

- ❖ Ensure that the candidates volunteering for the missions follow a *formative process of at least a year's duration*, in line with existing programs at national and interprovincial level.
- ❖ Prepare volunteer missionaries as to how they *must insert themselves into the Province receiving them*, on their willingness to listen, their “openness to world horizons, to intercultural situations, to interreligious and ecumenical dialogue”, and on the space to be reserved for more direct commitment on the frontier of evangelization. 78
- ❖ Prepare with the community accepting the volunteers *a program of formation and work*, and follow up the volunteers during their experience.
- ❖ Help the communities receiving the volunteers to settle *with equity and discretion* some conditions inherent in their lives, such as a minimum salary, their living conditions, savings, travelling details, journey home, etc.
- ❖ Keep in contact with the volunteers even *after their return*, so that they can be active witnesses in the Christian community which sent them, *and bring the richness of their experience* to the formation of other volunteers and the animation of missionary groups.
- ❖ Sensitize the EPC to keep always in mind a “ culture of volunteer work”, emphasizing that:

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74 cf. EMD, p. 47; VIS, p. 8.

75 cf. AMS, pp. 22-23.

76 VECCHI J.E., o.c. pp. 294-295.

77 cf. Salesian Volunteer Movement and Mission, Rome 1997.

78 cf. *ibid.* p.17.

volunteer  
relationship

- The volunteer missionary movement makes better understood “ the linkage and exchange of riches between Christian communities realized through work, which constitutes the human bridge which makes reciprocal possible”. 79
  - The salesian missionary movement is the most mature expression of the scope of salesian formation; it makes concrete at a high level Don Bosco’s idea of the cooperator. 80
- Involve the EPC in **the celebration of the Salesian and World Missionary Days**. For this purpose it will be useful:
- ❖ To see that each of these “days” is preceded by a *suitable preparation in all local communities, involving those in charge of missionary formation and appealing to their creativity.*
  - ❖ To make use of the various means available for the purpose: the material sent out by the Missions Department, the multiplication of items contained therein or the result of personal creativity, the provincial newsletter, the local salesian bulletin, and aids put out by the Pontifical Missionary Union.
  - ❖ To sensitize and educate the Christian community and the young members in particular, to the duty of contribution even financially to missionary work, giving reasons for specific projects, thanking those making offerings, and informing them of the projects concerned.

## MISSIONARY SPIRITUALITY

Educating to the missionary dimension and keeping alive the commitment to the mission ad gentes is a satisfying task involving the whole of the person and one which puts him in the forefront of the work of building the Kingdom of God.

The provincial Delegate for Missionary Animation is aware that he received this task as a special vocation which makes demands on his personal resources of *formation, of contemplative ability, and his practical apostolic skill*

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79 EMD, p. 41

80 Cf. VIS, “Camminare insieme”. 1993, p. 39.



- Anyone wanting to commit himself to the missions today must *make himself capable “of an open intelligence and positive confrontation with the new phenomena”* – in the complex social reality of the peoples of every continent -, “*understand in the heart of life, and interpret new languages*”. 85

The effort of inculturation requires a patient work of first proclamation, the ability to bear sincere witness to the radical nature of one’s options, skill in being able to dialogue with freedom and conviction, and the humility to learn from others and listen to what they say.

- “Animation” is an art of learning, a gift of God, on a par with that of prayer and fellowship. The missionary animator knows that his interior strength is given to him by the Spirit, who is the source from which he continually derives his energy. Creativity, organizational capacity, planning, important as they all are, have need of a deep spirituality.

His contemplative capacity, moreover, is further revealed in docility to the Spirit who transform him into a courageous witness to Christ, and an enlightened proclaimer of his Word. Conformation to Christ and close communion with him are necessary if he is to be capable of detachment, of leaving his own country, of self-renunciation and humble insertion among new people to be all things of them.

We read in “Redemptoris Missio”: *Even before activity, mission means witness and a way of life that shines out to others. It commits us to being molded from within by the Spirit, so that we may become ever more like Christ. Unless the missionary is a contemplative, he cannot proclaim Christ in a credible way. Only thus can he be a sign of God in the world*”. 86

- Finally, apostolic interior conviction is the quality of the missionary which enables him to work as though he saw the invisible, to live in the *ecstasy of activity*, which makes his faith industrious, and able to diffuse his own interior beliefs.

What makes missionary animation authentic is its concrete ecclesial association: the missionary does not live on the margin of the Church, but *works within it and build it up*: 87 “ he is urged in by zeal for souls, lives his love towards all – especially the poor and lowly – overcomes divisions of race, cast or ideology; his love excludes no one and has no preference”. 88

Whoever has experienced a call to the mission *ad gentes*, or to educate to such a call, feels within himself the urge to open himself to the universal mission of the Church, to change his own way of life, and bear witness to his joy at having found in Jesus the content, style and motivation for giving himself to God and his neighbour.

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85 VECCHI J.E., “For you I study”, in AGC 361, p.14.

86 RM 26.87.88.91.

87 cf. VIGANO’ E., o.c. pp. 36-37.

88 RM 89.