 Reading time: 5 min.

150 years have passed since the First Salesian Missionary Expedition. But the 150th Salesian Missionary Expedition is much more than a numerical anniversary. It is an event that tells the story of fidelity over time to a charism born from the heart of Don Bosco and entrusted to the Church for the good of young people. It was 1875 when, from Valdocco, Don John Bosco sent the first ten missionaries, led by Fr. John Cagliero, to Patagonia. Since then, uninterruptedly, every year, the Salesian Congregation repeats that missionary gesture which is not a simple tradition, but an expression of a profound identity, ***to bring the Gospel to young people, especially the poorest, wherever life calls.***

150 Years of the First Missionary Expedition. Thanking the past, rethinking the present, relaunching for the future

With 150 Years of Missionary Expeditions, the Salesians of Don Bosco relive that foundational moment in the spirit of today, with the awareness that the world has changed, that missions are no longer just “departures” to distant places, but living testimonies also in urban, secularised and digital contexts. This anniversary thus becomes a great opportunity **to give thanks, rethink and relaunch** the Salesian missionary vocation.

To give thanks: a treasure of audacity and faith
Celebrating 150 missionary expeditions is first and foremost an act of gratitude. It is looking back with gratitude at a history that has seen courage become concrete action and dreams become life.

Gratitude for Don Bosco’s missionary courage. Sending missionaries to Patagonia in 1875 was not an obvious choice. It required faith, courage, and the ability to look far ahead. Don Bosco did not hesitate to take risks, sustained by an unwavering trust in Mary Help of Christians and an ardent passion for the salvation of souls.

Gratitude for the 10,700 Salesian missionaries who, from 1875 to today, have been sent all over the world. With them, thousands of FMA, cooperators, volunteers, and lay missionaries have shared the same educational and evangelising passion, often in conditions of poverty, war, isolation or misunderstanding.

Gratitude for millions of young people reached, educated, accompanied in faith, rescued from misery, abandonment or violence. Every oratory founded, every

school opened, every reception home built is a concrete sign of God’s love made present through Don Bosco’s educational charity.

Gratitude for the Salesian presence today in 137 countries around the world, a living testimony of a charism that has been able to cross geographical and cultural boundaries, adapting without losing its soul, the *“Da mihi animas, cetera tolle”.*

To rethink: reading the signs of the times to be missionaries today
However, the time for gratitude is not enough. The missionary world is changing and the Salesians are called **to rethink** their presence to be faithful to the Gospel and at the same time attentive to the real needs of today’s young people.

Rethinking means having a renewed vision of missions. Mission is not only *“ad gentes”*, but also *“inter gentes”* and *“inter culturas”*. Today mission is cultural deepening and educational dialogue. It is building bridges and not barriers; it is proclaiming Christ also through the promotion of the human.

Presence among believers of other religions. Salesian missionaries often live in contexts with a Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist majority. Here mission passes through dialogue, fraternity and the silent testimony of a life given, where the school and the oratory become privileged places of peace and coexistence.

Living in secularised contexts. Even the great Western metropolises are today mission territory. Here young people suffer from digital loneliness, crises of meaning, addictions, and unemployment. The Salesian missionary presence cannot ignore these urban challenges, where the Gospel must once again speak to the heart of a fragmented society.

Facing new challenges and perspectives. Migrations, educational poverty, humanitarian emergencies, and environmental crises mark this time. The Salesian mission is called to be a prophecy of hope, with concrete works that educate to faith, justice, citizenship and care for creation.

To relaunch: rekindling missionary zeal
The celebration of 150 years of mission is not a finish line: it’s a **new beginning**. The missionary future of the Congregation depends on the ability **to relaunch** with courage, creativity, and prophecy.

Relaunching missionary zeal among poor young people. They remain the centre of

the Salesian mission. They are the young people from urban peripheries, unemployed young people, migrants without rights, minors who are victims of trafficking, young people from favelas, shantytowns, and slums. Don Bosco's charism was born for them and will continue to live with them.

Being present in new mission areas. There are regions that are still awaiting the Salesian presence: rural areas of Africa, isolated villages in Asia, indigenous communities in the Amazon, forgotten peripheries of Europe. The future of the mission passes through the ability to go out again, to set out with humility and audacity.

Renewing the mission in areas where the charism needs to be rekindled. It is not only about opening new works, but also about regenerating existing ones. Many missionary communities today demand new energies, more presence among young people, more communion between consecrated and lay people, more evangelising creativity. Mission is first and foremost a conversion of the heart.

The 150th anniversary of the first Missionary Expedition is an invitation to put Christ and young people back at the centre. Giving thanks for the past, rethinking the present, and relaunching the future are three verbs that hold the meaning of this celebration. Don Bosco continues to tell his sons and daughters, *"Your homeland is the whole world."* With this spirit, Salesian missionaries will continue to walk the roads of the world, so that every young person can feel loved and encounter the good face of God.

The mission is one: that received from Jesus, to proclaim the Gospel according to the Salesian charism. The greatness of this mandate is also recognised in the generosity of many Salesians who, over 150 years, have responded with their "yes" to this call. The numbers also bear witness to the extraordinary impact of this work. We therefore present the missionaries sent by Don Bosco to date:

Rectorship	**Period**	**Missionaries**
Don Bosco	1875-1888	153
Fr. Rua	1888-1910	1528
Fr. Albera	1910-1921	501

Fr. Rinaldi	1922-1931	1984
Fr. Ricaldone	1932-1951	2665
Fr. Ziggiotti	1952-1965	1455
Fr. Ricceri	1965-1977	740
Fr. Viganò	1977-1995	870
Fr. Vecchi	1996-2002	196
Fr. Chavez	2002-2014	355
Fr. Fernandez	2014-2024	253
Total	*1875-2024*	*10700*

And we also add the 19 missionaries for this year, 2025, a doubly jubilee year:

Country of origin	**Name**	**Destination**
Dem. Rep. Congo	Josue NGUSU NSIMBA	Grecia
Dem. Rep. Congo	Jean NTUMBA LILEY	PGS-Vanuatu
Dem. Rep. Congo	Michel MBUNGU MAKUTUBU	CIL
Kenya	Solomon BALIKUDDEMBE	INC – Bangladesh
Uganda	Isaac OFOYRWOTH	PGS-Vanuatu

Bolivia	Paolo Estefano LENAZ	BMA
Japan	Chihiro MORITO	AFE-Sudan
India	Zabenthung Dominic HUMTSOE LOTHA	INE-Romania/Moldavia
India	Molson Hubert UTTAM	AFM
Madagascar	Charles NIRINA RASENDRAMANANA	GER-Turkey
Poland	Marcin WOSIEK	Greece
Zambia	Mwila MUMBA	INC – Bangladesh
Zambia	Musa NG'ANDWE	INE-Romania/ Moldavia
Timor Leste	Tobias Freitas DO NASCIMENTO	MOZ
Angola	Francisco Miguel DA GRAÇA	BMA
Vietnam	Francis TRAN VAN NHO	THA/Cambodia
Vietnam	Simon NGUYỄN THANH SANG	KOR-Mongolia
Vietnam	Vincent NGUYEN TIEN NAM	CIL
Vietnam	Chuyen NGUYEN	AFM

Another nine Salesians who, for various reasons, did not participate in past missionary send-offs, will join to receive the missionary cross.

We also present the programme designed for this event, which will be celebrated in Valdocco – Turin, between 8 and 12 November.

The programme for the 150th anniversary of the First Salesian Missionary

Expedition

8-9 November: Meeting of young people from Italian Missionary Animation, BeAMission
8-11 November: World Meeting of DIAM (**P**rovincial **D**elegates for **M**issionary **A**nimation)
11 November: 156*th* Salesian Missionary Expedition SDB and 148th FMA. Holy Mass will be celebrated at 5:00 PM, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians and broadcast live on the Youtube ANS channel, of the Salesian Info Agency
12 November: Inauguration of the Museum of Salesian Missionary Expeditions in Genoa
13-15 November: Consultation of the Missions Sector

Detailed programme

BeAMission
8 November, 2:00 PM: Launch of activities and start of programme
8 November, 8:45 PM: Missionary celebration
9 November, morning: Living libraries and dialogue with new missionaries
9 November, 3:00 PM: Mass and missionary sending of young people
9 November, 4:30 PM: Refreshments and greetings

World Meeting of DIAM
9 November, 7:00 PM: Vespers and start of meeting
10 November: Formation, sharing and reflection
10 November, evening: Presentation of Bosco Food
11 November, morning: Continental and regional DIAM meetings
11 November, 3:00 PM: Meeting with the Rector Major, Fr. Fabio ATTARD
11 November, 5:00 PM: 156th Salesian Missionary Expedition SDB and 148th FMA in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians
12 November: Day in Genoa and inauguration of the Museum of Salesian Missionary Expeditions
12 November, evening: Conclusion of the DIAM meeting