

□ Reading time: 5 min.

*The theme of this year's Salesian Missionary Day (SMD) is Salesian missionary solidarity: a journey that has its roots in the past and extends to embrace the entire world. The witness of the Salesian Mission Offices offers a concrete and stimulating look at this reality, helping us to reflect. It is not an event tied to a single date. Each Province is in fact free to identify the most suitable period for its own rhythm and calendar, so as to best experience this significant moment of missionary animation. It is a precious opportunity offered to Salesian communities, Educative-Pastoral Communities, young people and all members of the Salesian Family to rediscover and value an essential dimension of the Salesian charism, promoting and spreading a renewed missionary sensitivity.*

### **The roots: Don Bosco and the DNA of solidarity**

Solidarity is not an abstract concept in the Salesian world. It has precise roots, a concrete face, and a history as long as the Congregation itself.

As Alberto Lopez, spokesperson for *Misiones Salesianas* in Madrid, points out, “although the English term *fundraising* is modern, the purpose it pursues — seeking, animating, and involving many people in the sustainability of a mission — has belonged to the Salesian DNA since the beginning of the work in Valdocco.” Don Bosco did not have large funds at his disposal, but he possessed inexhaustible creativity and absolute trust in Providence. He managed to mobilise friends, benefactors, collaborators, and even anticlerical politicians in favour of the neediest young people. He did not appeal to pity. He appealed to purpose.

Fr. Fidel Orendain SDB, General Councillor for Social Communication, expresses it clearly: “The central message we must communicate is not: *Help us because we are in need, but rather: Join us because we are trying to do good.* Don Bosco wanted others to share the joy of seeing a child learn a trade, a young person find hope, a soul rediscover faith.”

## **The heart of the message: giving and receiving**

Before exploring how this solidarity is organised today, it is worth pausing on what *giving* truly means.

The Gospel offers a powerful image: the widow's mite, who gives all the little she had. From the poor, from the little ones, from those who know how to share starting from their own poverty, there is always something to learn. A wise Mapuche leader from Patagonia said it with disarming simplicity: "*No one is so poor that they have nothing to give, and no one is so rich that they have nothing to receive*".

Fr. Jorge Mario Crisafulli SDB, General Councillor for the Missions, explores this point further in his *lectio divina*: "Giving everything does not just mean giving money. Sometimes, the most precious thing is not the things we offer, but ourselves: our time, our listening, our energy, our talents, our joy, our hope. The world needs people willing to live generously, to love without measure, to say yes when Jesus calls."

## **The Mission Offices: a structure at the service of the mission**

Over time, this vision has been translated into concrete tools. **The Salesian Mission Offices** — described in detail in the *Acts of the General Council (AGC 443 and AGC 444)* — are offices established by the Provincial, with the consent of his Council and the approval of the Rector Major, with the aim of supporting the Province in all actions oriented towards integral evangelisation and integral human development, with particular attention to poor and marginalised young people.

Each office has its own statute, a director in charge, and a board of directors. The Missions Sector coordinates the work of all the offices, promoting synergies and networked solidarity. It must be emphasised that they are not simply fundraising offices; they are instruments of active involvement in the Salesian mission.

A historical example comes from the **United States**, where Fr. Ed Cappelletti — described as a "visionary pioneer" in the art of resource mobilisation — dedicated 63 years of his Salesian priestly vocation to telling the stories of missionary works to generate support. As early as 1963, with a small staff of three typists, he compiled one of the first systematic lists of donors, a forerunner of modern newsletters. His

motto, chosen since his ordination, summed it all up, “*The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.*”

## **A global network: from Kenya to Korea**

Mission Offices are not the prerogative of economically rich countries. All Provinces are invited to contribute, each according to its own possibilities.

Fr. Felice Molino SDB, a missionary in **Kenya**, describes the vocation of the Nairobi office as follows: “Don Bosco gives a task to our Mission Office: go to the poor, tell them that you love them and then go to the others saying that everyone can become a Good Samaritan for so many young people in difficulty.”

From **South Korea**, Julie Kim recounts an extraordinary journey: a Country that has gone through Japanese colonialism, war, and democratisation movements, to become the first country in the world to transition from being a *recipient* of international aid to becoming a *donor*. The Korean Salesian Mission Office, established in 2012, is an expression of this maturity. When donors and past pupils say with quiet pride “*Now it is our turn to help*”, their words reflect both a sense of moral duty and a profound awareness: giving creates abundance.

The office is also a spiritual bridge. As *Missioni Don Bosco* in Turin reminds us, Don Bosco’s recommendation to pray for benefactors was not aimed at the continuity of aid, but at the care of their lives. “The presence of people on the frontiers of fraternity generates in them gratitude for those who offer their means for the realisation of works of material and spiritual charity.”

## **Solidarity in action: emergencies and development**

Salesian solidarity does not stop in ordinary times. Between 2020 and 2025 alone, from the Covid-19 pandemic to the celebration of the 29th General Chapter, the **Salesian Emergency Response** mechanism mobilised 40 million euros in 26 emergencies, developing over 1,000 projects for humanitarian aid, education, reconstruction, and psychosocial support.

Angel Gudiña, coordinator of the **Don Bosco Network**, clarifies the perspective: “Although in an emergency we must provide for the most basic needs, we do so with the great global Salesian network of solidarity and development in mind, leaving behind welfare dependency and working as partners, in international cooperation that focuses on the rights of young people.”

Fr. Antoine Farrugia SDB, Safeguarding and Advocacy Coordinator of the Congregation, says it bluntly: “Solidarity is not a slogan. It is our way of life. When we defend young people, we defend the Gospel and contribute to shaping the future.”

### **Educating to solidarity: young people as protagonists**

Solidarity is also learned. At school, in communities, through concrete educational pathways. It is with this spirit that the **Don Bosco nel Mondo Foundation** promoted the second edition of “*Sognati da grande*” (Dreamt of when you grow up), a creative contest aimed at Salesian schools and VTCs, in which students were invited to talk about what peace means to them. The contest is twinned with the Salesian mission in **Niamey, Niger**, where peace and security are under attack every day.

### **The Salesian Missionary Day: an opportunity for everyone**

It is in this rich and articulated context that the **Salesian Missionary Day (SMD)** is situated, an opportunity offered to Salesian communities, Educative-Pastoral Communities, young people, and the whole Salesian Family to experience and deepen the missionary dimension of Don Bosco’s charism. There is no single date: each Province chooses the most suitable moment for its own calendar. This year’s theme — *Salesian missionary solidarity* — is accompanied by specially prepared materials, available by writing to [cagliero11@sdb.org](mailto:cagliero11@sdb.org).

Fr. Eric Mairura SDB, coordinator of missionary solidarity at the congregational level, offers the overall perspective: “In a world that often seems divided, our Salesian mission calls us to unite in compassion and action towards the poor. Together, we are a beacon of hope, inspired by St. John Bosco’s vision of a world

where every young person can thrive.”

The SMD prayer gathers all this in a few words:

*Lord of all good, who shows us the way of solidarity*

*open our hearts so that Your mission may always be alive in the world.*

*With the style of Don Bosco, help us to be a seed of hope that ignites Your spirit,  
in every place, at every time.*

*May every young person we meet see Your face in us,*

*experiencing the joy of the gift and the embrace of God the Father in the simplest  
gestures.*

*May everyone be able to give time, resources, joy, closeness to those who need it  
most building a more human society that has You at the centre.*

*Material sent by Marco Fulgaro*