

POINTS FOR MISSIONARY ANIMATION AT PROVINCIAL LEVEL

SCHEME

Introduction:

- This weekend of ongoing formation is an occasion for sharing the missionary dimension of our human, Christian and salesian vocation, which is open to new horizons and more demanding challenges.
- *Main objective:* to share with you the fundamental points of missionary animation (concepts, present points of reference, methodology and organization): to reflect together on an essential element of our salesian identity (cf. C 30).

1. Concept of Missionary Animation

- The term "Missionary animation", in Christian theology, refers directly to the growth of the Church's mission; in a quite particular way it gives priority to the first evangelization, the implanting of the Church, and the different means and content of missionary work and cooperation.
- It is a question of a *global dimension* of the Christian reality in respect of the mission.
- It is an intrinsic dimension of the Church in so far as it is CATHOLIC, i.e. *universal*.
- It is an expression of the communion of the Churches, and hence of their *reciprocity*.

- It is a fact of pastoral projection which tends to *pervade* the other dimensions of the Church and enrich them with innovation and missionary freshness.

2. Different aspects of Missionary Animation

- *Anthropological aspect.* the human person is subjective and open to things outside himself; this implies: self-understanding as part of the whole, openness to horizons and universal interests, active and practical involvement in the needs of others.
- *Christological aspect.* Jesus Christ is the essential formation of Missionary Animation, because: He is the definitive Revealer of the Father's plan of salvation; all his life and especially in the paschal mystery he is the Good News to be recounted and proclaimed, He is the first Missionary sent by the Father, he is the supreme model of inculturation through the Incarnation.
- *Pneumatological aspect.* Missionary Animation points to spirituality, because the Spirit offers the surprise of the missionary call, courage to make the proclamation, perseverance in the face of problems and a constant search for what is new.
- *Ecclesiological aspect.* the Church, as the sign and sacrament of Christ in history, is animated and prompted to missionary expansion by the sanctifying action of the Spirit, because to be Catholic has always meant being missionary, and being Catholic is the result of being missionary. If being missionary belongs to the nature of the Church, missionary animation becomes the transverse dimension of pastoral method and content.

3. Main Objectives of Missionary Animation

The *main objectives* refer to the settings in which Missionary Animation functions as a transverse dimension; they are:

- Promotion of *interest* in the missions *ad gentes* in the EPC.
- Fostering the *formation* of all the components of the EPC to be living witnesses committed to spreading and communicating the faith.
- Suggesting *concrete ways of realization* to facilitate in the EPC commitment for the missions *ad gentes*.

4. The transverse dimension of Missionary Animation

4.1 As regards youth pastoral work

- It pervades and gives dynamism to youth pastoral work, in its *contents, style and choice of those to whom it is directed*.
- It emphasizes the *priority of the First evangelization*, the witness of life, the explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ, and the universal horizon of the Church.
- It invites the young to become involved in the *worldwide aspect*, in the positive understanding of *other religions* and of the culture of *ethnic minorities*.

4.2 As regards vocational pastoral work

- It presents the missionary vocation *within vocational pastoral work*, and emphasizes its specific nature as a call to a total exodus for the proclamation of the Kingdom of God.
- It emphasizes the following aspects in particular: gratuity, the global sense, complete and unconditional self-giving, openness to dialogue, to other social and religious cultures, a commitment to the poor and destitute, the willingness to

dedicate one's whole life to the proclamation of the Good News.

- The missionary dimension is impressive as the first and challenging vocational motivation because it appeals to the generosity and sense of risk and adventure to which young people are particularly sensitive (according to what novices say in various parts of the world).

4.3 As regards the **EPC**

- Every religious community and, with still greater reason, every educative and pastoral community, as an ecclesial setting, is called to become missionary, *because the mission is its reason for existing and operating.*
- The work of the EPC is directed primarily to young people who are poor, to young workers, to the working classes and to *peoples not yet evangelized*: they form the peculiarly "missionary" sector of our efforts.
- An authentic salesian EPC is open to a vision of the universal Church; it includes missionary animation transversally in the PEPS and annual programming; it fosters the twinning process with missionary territories, and facilitates missionary cooperation of a financial and spiritual nature; it educates both young and adults (teachers and parents) to a global outlook and to obedience to Christ's command about the universal proclamation of the Good News.
- A true salesian EPC is always careful to overcome the *temptation* to limit the missionary horizon to its *own particular mission.*

5. The present missionary horizon of the Church and the Congregation

5.1 The main positive elements

- A clear awareness of the singular nature of the missionary vocation within the vocation to the religious consecrated life.
- The preferential option for a *lifelong missionary vocation*, or for at least five years as a temporary option.
- A renewed interest in the *first proclamation of the Good News*, and for the processes of the *catechumenate*.
- A growing awareness of the *urgency of inculturation* in the liturgy, in the content of evangelization, in the discernment of local vocations, in the style of local leadership, and in active and positive respect for the *Semina Verbi*.
- A progressive evolution and change in the *geography of the countries from which missionaries come*: a substantial movement from the ancient cradles of Christianity to the new Churches, especially those of ASIA and AFRICA.
- A *competent and variegated missionary contribution* in line with the particular characteristics of each Missionary Institute.
- A substantial and faithful reference to the *ecclesiology of Vatican II* and to the missionary lines of the post-conciliar documents (EN, RMI, CM).
- A growing and *heroic testimony* of many missionaries, men and women,, martyred for the cause of the Gospel (1998: 37 martyrs!).
- A silent and contemplative missionary presence, actively committed in the educative and social field, in *fundamentalist environments*.

5.2 The more evident shortcomings

- The *difficult harmonization* between the needs of the *First Evangelization* (i.e. the proclamation to non-believers), and the components of an authentic *interreligious dialogue*.

- The *difficult synthesis* between substantial fidelity to the content of the *Kerygma* and of Tradition, and the requirements of a serious *inculturation*; and by analogy, the harmony between fidelity to founders of the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the demands for the inculturation of the charism in mission territories.
- The *difficult passage* and transfer of the responsibility of leadership from missionaries coming from the Churches of *ancient Christianity* and missionaries coming from the *new Churches*.
- The slow process of the so-called "*missionary circulation*", from the West to the mission territories, and now from mission territories to the West (Foreign priests in Italy, evidence during the Pastoral Week).
- The *difficult dosage* between *missionary cooperation in financial resources*, and respect for the *process of inculturation of projects*: western managerial efficiency against local cultural parameters.
- The *inadequate theological and pastoral clarity* of fundamental Christological truth regarding the *uniqueness of Christ as the universal Redeemer* in relationship with other means of salvation (especially in Asia).

6. The principal contents of salesian missionary praxis

- The *history of the expansion of the Salesian Congregation* is substantially the *story of missionary expansion*: today the Congregation is universal and catholic because it is missionary.
- A process of "*re-founding*" of the Congregation: a new understanding of the salesian charism starting from the context of the new territory.
- The missionary dimension of the Congregation has become *one in variety*, diversified in a substantial unity (C 100).

- The *combining of European Provinces* is now being counterbalanced by the erection of *new Provinces and Vice-provinces in Africa and Asia*.
- The missions provide daily evidence of the *universality of the foundations of salesian pedagogy*, flexible in every cultural context and open to everyone for whom we work. Linked with this fact is the universality of the '*Don Bosco*' phenomenon, spontaneously perceived as the genius of the world of youth.
- The missions have given rise to the constant challenge of *new native vocations*, and are still doing so.
- The first evangelization prompts research into the originality of journeys of faith, especially *those of the catechumenate*.
- Missionary circularity induces Salesians of *recently erected circumscriptions to offer themselves as missionaries* for other territories and continents.
- Missionary experience has always been (and still is) a school of evangelical radicalism, of holiness and joy.

7. The identity of the Provincial Delegate for Missionary Animation (PDMA)

The PDMA should be a person with a certain experience in the sector of missions *ad gentes*, with sufficient time to carry out his work and be encouraged in it, so as to be better able to guarantee the efficacy of animation in this sector.

- The **PDMA** is a relatively recent figure: he is one of the provincial delegates for animation, with specific obligations, and with organized links with the other delegates.
- His **primary tasks** are the following
 - to promote *interest* in the missions
 - to foster formation and witness to the faith
 - to suggest practical ways of commitment for the

missions *ad gentes*

- As regards his specific role **at the level of organization**:
 - The Provincial, in agreement with his Council, appoints a Provincial Delegate for Missionary Animation. The latter remains always in close contact with the provincial and council. He may be invited to attend council meetings when material dealing explicitly with missionary animation is being discussed. He is also the reference person with the Department for the Missions for the sharing of programs, utilization of material, etc.
 - The PDMA should have an effective place in the organization of the pastoral animation of the province. And so he must participate in meetings for programming, present to the Provincial and Council the plan for missionary animation within the PEPS, be part of the team for youth pastoral work, coordinate the activities of missionary animation at provincial level, check that the missionary dimension is present in the programs of youth pastoral work, vocational pastoral work, formation, lay projects, training of Volunteers; he must accompany the local communities in their programming of missionary animation, take part in meetings of the Salesian Family on the missionary dimension, be the spokesman of the province in connection with missionary animation in the local Church, coordinate and hold periodical meetings of the committee for missionary animation, take part in meetings of PDMA's at national and regional level, and also at world level if so requested.

8. CONCLUSION

Missionary animation as a teacher of **Missionary Spirituality**:

- We know the pneumatological, Christological and ecclesial dimensions of missionary animation: these dimensions are *paths to holiness*, because they are anchored in the call of the Spirit, in the following Christ even to martyrdom, and in the holiness and universality of the Church which makes of the missionary the *universal brother and sister*.
- We know at a salesian level that the missionary slant emphasizes complete donation, the spirit of creativity and flexibility, hard work and temperance, the art of harmonizing evangelization with education, and the indispensable Marian dimension, and specifically the spreading of devotion to **Mary Help of Christians**.
- Substantially, missionary animation aims at giving rise to elements that can multiply holiness, because by *antonomasia* the missionary life is one of evangelical radicalism for the expansion of God's Kingdom.

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