



Prepared Exclusively for Special Friends of Salesian Missions
A Written Testimony Of How You Bring God-Saving Grace To A Troubled World

Salesian Missionaries Risk Their Lives To Help Victims of War-Torn Syria

In Aleppo – a city torn apart by unspeakable violence – constant fear is sown among her people.

For five turbulent years, an escalating civil war has gutted the city and crushed its soul. A constant barrage of heavy artillery, rocket fire, bombs and home-made explosives have destroyed the majority of homes, businesses and public spaces. Roads and bridges are impassible; water supplies and electricity cut off. Families with the resources to flee did so long ago, and those who remain live in constant fear. Two months after a cease fire was brokered, airstrikes resumed and more than 300 innocent civilians perished.

Despite these dire circumstances – and at great peril to their own lives – our Salesian Missionaries are steadfast in their commitment to remain in Aleppo.

It is a choice each of our missionaries has made individually and freely. They have chosen to continue their



programs as if nothing had happened, offering families a place where they can breathe stability and harmony even in the midst of chaos.

The task has not always been easy. For a time, bombings close to the Salesian campus forced missionaries to close the oratory for safety reasons. And sadly, in early 2016, a missile struck the house of two Salesian youth leaders, killing them and their mother.

Yet our missionaries are not deterred by their grieving and loss. Rather, they find the strength to carry on.

In April, during a time of intensifying violence, missionaries suspended activities at the youth center

in order to open its doors for more than 200 families in need of food, water, basic necessities and the comfort of others.

Children and youth play on its grounds, forgetting the surrounding horrors for a few joyous moments each day. And the facilities have become the sole gathering place for members of other parishes and groups who no longer have a place to worship. Young priests from different Christian denominations meet weekly at the Salesian House, where they encourage each other and share their faith experiences in the context of such violence. This has drawn the Salesians even closer to the shrinking number of Christians who remain in Aleppo.

Through it all, the promise of Aleppo's youth inspire our missionaries to persevere – for when the playground is full of children, it means there is still hope for a better future.

To learn more, go online to:
salesianmissions.org/aleppo
salesianmissions.org/istanbul

This Month's Child



Name: Tiago
Age: 12 Years Old
Home: Medellín, Colombia

"I'm here because I've done bad things."

These are the heartbreaking words of young Tiago, who ran away from home. His father had died, his mother had rented out the family home because she could no longer afford it, and Tiago saw little hope for the future. So he took to the streets of Medellín.

There, he fell victim to its horrors: violence, exploitation, poor health and the constant lure of drugs to numb his despair. He had all but given up – until he encountered an outreach worker

from *Patio Don Bosco*.

Since 1965, *Patio Don Bosco* has offered safe shelter, nutritious meals, educational opportunities and life-skills training to help homeless youth rediscover their human dignity, purpose and direction.

Today, it has also ignited Tiago's hope. "I know now that I have a great opportunity for the future and I don't want to waste it," he exclaims. "I am very grateful to the Salesians for that." He plans to learn a trade and dreams of attending Ciudad Don Bosco to become a laboratory technician.

This Month's Call For Prayer

Senseless violence and wars claim millions of innocent victims around the world every year. Those who survive are relegated to lives of poverty, hopelessness and despair. Please pray for lasting peace and an end to the needless suffering of war.

Join Us in Prayer... Submit Your Own Intentions...
Go online to: www.salesianmissions.org/pray



Monthly Missions Report...

In Ivory Coast...

“In Africa, it seems, the rain will wash it all away.”

So says Father Carlos Berro, a Salesian Missionary in the town of Duékoué, Ivory Coast. He refers to the brutal 2011 civil war, which reigned unspeakable violence and death on thousands of innocent men, women and children.

A new documentary, “30,000,” honors the work and sacrifices of Fr. Berro and his colleagues on behalf of those survivors. As combatants advanced on Duékoué, tens of thousands of frightened civilians fled for the grounds of Saint Therese of the Child of Jesus.

They prayed for their lives – and God answered their prayers. Out of deference to the Salesians, soldiers left the mission grounds untouched.

Today, among other efforts aimed at lasting peace, our missionaries offer rehabilitation programs, grounded in education, for former youth combatants.

To learn more, go online to: salesianmissions.org/ivory-coast



In Mexico...



Feeding the hungry and sheltering the homeless – these are just two acts of mercy Salesian Missionaries are offering to migrants and refugees in Tijuana.

Every day, hoping for political asylum in the United States, hundreds of people arrive in this border city, where they are forced to wait – sometimes for long periods – on a decision. They have no food, no water, no place to hide from the blistering sun.

In response to their plight, Father Felipe Plascencia, rector of the Salesian House there, has opened the doors to the cafeteria and the oratory. Currently, as many as 170 people request assistance each day. Some even spend the night in activity spaces that have been converted into bedrooms. Volunteers from other churches help prepare and serve the meals.

Although his costs have noticeably increased, Fr. Plascencia is committed to helping as many displaced people as possible.

In Samoa...

For 25 years, Salesian Missionaries in this tiny island nation have been working on behalf of disadvantaged youth who struggle to gain an education and find employment.

At Don Bosco Technical Training Centre in Alafua, more than 180 boys are pursuing two- or four-year programs in sought-after trades including automotive, welding and metal fabrication, carpentry, plumbing and electrical.



Whether they remain in Samoa after graduation, or seek opportunities in Australia or New Zealand, an impressive 85 percent of them secure long-term work within their field.

In addition to classroom and practical work, students have opportunities to participate in a variety of sports and cultural activities. Don Bosco’s *fautasi* (long boat) crew is among the most competitive in the country, and their dance troupe is renowned.

Missionary of the Month: Fr. Leon Cruz, SDB

This past Ash Wednesday, Pope Francis appointed Father Leon Cruz as a Missionary of Mercy for the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy year.

This appointment is especially meaningful as Fr. Cruz is the only Salesian to fulfill the role. He joins more than 1,000 other priests and brothers who will act as “living signs of the Father’s welcome to all those in search of His forgiveness.”

Fr. Cruz will offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation to those in his own diocese of Mumbai, India. He will also be available to other Bishops to lead Jubilee-related missions and initiatives.

His enthusiasm for the work is obvious, as he has wasted no time in planning pilgrimages, retreats, and a “mercy band” for students at the Don Bosco Center for Learning in Kurla, where he is



based. He has even launched a “Face of Mercy” Facebook page to engage youth in the Jubilee!

Congratulations, Fr. Cruz, and God bless you!

In Solidarity, Despite the Danger

Dear Friend,

We will remain.

In the face of so much violence, destruction and despair in the world, these are powerful words. And they become even more powerful when put into action.

We will remain.

Time and again, when brutal wars and catastrophic disasters threaten the very lives of the children and families in our care, our Salesian Missionaries refuse to abandon them. Instead – often at great risk to their own lives – they

offer their buildings, their grounds, their guidance and support for all who seek an oasis of hope amid almost unimaginable fear.

Our efforts embody our commitment to the spiritual and corporal acts of Mercy that Pope Francis calls us to witness. Wherever and whenever people hunger or thirst, need shelter or are sick, long for belief or need our prayers, we will remain – working with and for our brothers and sisters in the spirit of Don Bosco.

Thank you for remaining by



our side as we fulfill our mission. You are an essential partner in our life-saving work.

May God bless you!

Fr. Mark Hyde, SDB

P.S. Please go to: salesianmissions.org/mercy to receive your FREE Year of Mercy Prayer Card set.

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