This Month’s Child

Two years ago, Óscar was selling candy on the streets in order to help support his family. Today, he has recaptured his lost childhood thanks to Salesian missionaries.

Recently, Fr. Tom visited the Salesian Missions office in New Rochelle, NY to recount his remarkable ordeal. Speaking before a transfixed audience comprising Salesian High School students, Salesian Missions and Provincial Center staff, and local priests, he expressed his gratitude for the intercessions he credits for his freedom.

“Fr. Tom never worried. “No fear of death overtook me,” he says. Instead, he employed what he describes as “spiritual survival tactics:” celebrating Mass in his head, and praying the Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, and the Divine Mercy Chaplet in order to ward off doubt. And, although distraught over the deaths of two nuns murdered before his own eyes, Fr. Tom never wavered in his faith and love for God.

While working for the poor in Yemen, Fr. Tom witnessed how hatred, fear and anger could tear apart communities and families. He constantly prayed that “the children would grow up in a world of peace and love, without conflict or war.”

“We were truly in the presence of a holy man,” says Fr. Mark Hyde, director of Salesian Missions, of Fr. Tom’s visit. “His humility and deference to God, Mother Mary and Don Bosco shone as he described a time when his faith was sorely being tested.”

To view clips of Fr. Tom’s speech, please go to www.salesianmissions.org/fr-tom

This Month’s Call For Prayer

Many of our missionaries put their lives at risk to help the world’s most vulnerable children of God. Please pray for their safety and wellbeing so they can continue to ease suffering and instill hope among those who desperately need it.
In Brazil...
In the heart of the Amazon rainforest, in the indigenous region of Iaueaté, Salesian missionaries help marginalized girls and boys overcome the challenges of social degradation.

Isolated by water and three days away from any services, their work can be lonely. But missionaries are motivated by the smiles of the precious “little ones” who have almost nothing, yet manage to find joy in a simple game, a dip in the river, a walk through the village.

Many have been abandoned or orphaned, the unwitting victims of pervasive substance abuse rooted in despair. Others—themselves mothers at an impressively young age—lack any meaningful support. And so our missionaries offer it: hot meals, a safe place to stay, basic medical care, and educational assistance.

Although simple, these gestures reassure children that life is worth living—and offer them hope for more dignified futures.

In Laos...
At the Don Bosco Youth Vocational Center in the capital city of Vientiane, Salesian missionaries have launched a new training program to prepare impoverished youth for in-demand careers.

Supported by the Don Bosco Foundation Thailand—and offered in partnership with the Lao Youth Union—the initiative ultimately will enroll as many as 750 students in one of four technical tracks: auto mechanics, welding, electrical wiring, or motorcycle repair. Students from distant villages can board at the school and participate in enrichment activities, such as music and sports, when not in the classroom. And, through targeted apprenticeships, students will further hone their skills for the marketplace.

In Laos, as many as 96,000 young people are looking for work in a given year. This new project is therefore crucial to their ability to secure sustainable employment and stable futures.

In Senegal...
Each year, thousands of young Senegalese men—desperate for economic opportunities their country cannot provide—risk their lives fleeing for greener pastures in Europe. Many of them never make it.

Today, through an innovative agricultural project, Salesian missionaries in Tambacounda hope to stem this tragic tide by creating concrete employment opportunities that support the local economy.

Missionary of the Month: Fr. Luigi Melesi
Following the recent death of Fr. Luigi Melesi, we remember this remarkable Italian missionary with gratitude and affection.

During his 58 years of faithful service, Fr. Luigi fulfilled a variety of assignments—but his most enduring legacy is that of “Jail Priest,” a role commemorated by author Silvia Valota in a book by the same name. For 30 years, as chaplain of San Vitore prison in Milan, Fr. Luigi accompanied those who had committed serious crimes, including murder, with the firm conviction that redemption was achievable.

“It is not possible to help a person change his life for the better if one does not take up his story,” he often said. “A person, to become good, must feel loved.” Fr. Luigi became a friend and brother to countless persons who transformed their lives as a result: a living example of Don Bosco’s vision.

May God fill Fr. Luigi with the joy, peace, and light of new life!

The Miracle of Transformation
Dear Friend,

Around the world, our Salesian missionaries work under some of the most challenging conditions to help at-risk children and families build the foundations for a better life. Often, this work can seem futile: so many lives appear too troubled, so many obstacles too great, to make any progress toward positive change.

Yet our missionaries persevere. Why? Because, as Fr. Luigi Melesi did (see above), they understand that by treating all people with patience, acceptance, and unconditional love, miraculous transformation is possible.

As you peruse this issue of our World Bulletin, I hope you will be inspired by the remarkable impact this compassionate approach can make.

On behalf of my fellow missionaries, I am grateful for your prayerful support…which bolsters their resolve, each and every day.

May God Bless You!