



SALESIAN MISSIONS

# World Bulletin

Fall 2021

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

## Education—The Most Powerful Weapon

When war first erupted in Tigray, Ethiopia in November 2020, the world was deaf to the whine of its missiles.

The brutal assaults, the senseless massacres, the heartbreaking isolation from outside assistance—all was lost amid the din of our ongoing pandemic. With so many COVID-related crises to cover, the press simply couldn't hear the victims' cries for help.

But our Salesian missionaries heard.

More than that, they *saw*. Because they serve in four communities within the Tigray region, our dedicated priests and sisters witnessed, first-hand, the very human consequences of the violence. And that experience merely intensified their commitment to Ethiopia and its people—a commitment made more than 45 years ago, when missionaries first arrived in Mekellé.

It hasn't always been easy. Even before the ongoing crisis in Tigray, the country has battled



violence, famine, disease, and other daunting challenges. Yet, buoyed by the resilience and potential of the children and families they serve, our missionaries have persevered—and continue to fight for better futures with the most powerful weapon they have: education.

Today, in 14 different communities throughout the country, they wield it liberally on behalf of countless impoverished, vulnerable, and at-risk youth. Through traditional schools, vocational training, and wraparound social programs for students and their families, missionaries take aim at the root causes of poverty and despair.

In Tigray specifically, students at the Don Bosco Technical Institute in Adwa can train in manufacturing, construction, metalworking, tailoring, IT, and other in-demand trades. At the Don Bosco Catholic School of Shire, girls and boys can prepare for traditional secondary education. And at the Don Bosco Technical Institute in Mekellé, youth can learn mechanics, welding, and automotive skills. To date, thousands of students have graduated from these institutions. Amid the crisis, missionaries are working hard to guarantee poor youth their continued right to study—including financial assistance and support for remote learning initiatives.

While our missionaries understand there's no magic bullet to eliminate Ethiopia's systemic challenges overnight, their eyes remain fixed on the target: to create a more just, equitable society, built on the foundations of education. When that happens, there should be no need for war. **To learn more, go to:** [salesianmissions.org/ethiopia](https://salesianmissions.org/ethiopia)

## This Month's Child



Name: Veronica (*Querida*)  
Age: 8 Years Old  
Home: Bolivia

*"You wanted me here with you, right?"*

It's the first question that little Veronica asked when she arrived in her new dormitory at Hogar Maria Auxiliadora. Much to her great relief, the resounding answer was "yes!"

Veronica had brought nothing with her to "the Hogar"; she simply had nothing to bring. Nothing, that is, except an easy smile that belied her fear that she was unworthy of love. That's when a Salesian Lay Missioner serving there decided to nickname Veronica,

*Querida*, derived from the Spanish "to love."

Veronica lives, plays, and attends school at the Hogar alongside 45 other orphaned, abandoned, or abused girls like her. Located in Cochabamba, Bolivia, this long-term residential home offers a safe, structured setting where girls can ultimately grow to become independent, confident young women.

Now in the second grade, and heartened by her new nickname, Veronica is well on her way to doing just that.

## This Month's Call For Prayer

*With the holidays approaching, please pray that those who are suffering the most will receive the love and support they need to overcome the challenges they face – and the hope and faith that better days are ahead. Join us at our weekly Chapel Mass - Live Streaming NOW! Go to our website for details: [SalesianMissions.org/mass](https://SalesianMissions.org/mass)*



**Advent Devotionals – Sign Up Now: [www.SalesianMissions.org/Advent](https://www.SalesianMissions.org/Advent)**

Advent is a time for intentional prayer, reflection and joyful anticipation. Our special devotionals, emailed weekly beginning Sunday, November 28th, will remind you of the true meaning of Christmas – and will inspire and guide your own preparation for our Savior's birth.

# Monthly Missions Report...

## In Ecuador...



In partnership with the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, the Salesian Polytechnic University of Quito has launched an innovative new training program to benefit 2,000 economically disadvantaged fishermen and their families.

The program will enroll participants who live and work in the ecologically sensitive area of the Cojimíes Estuary, a once-pristine coastal forest and watershed now threatened by the very industry that locals depend upon for their livelihoods. Driven by current scientific research and advances in modern technology, the curriculum will teach students how to improve upon their traditional fishing methods while reducing the environmental impact of their trade. By doing so, the program aims both to preserve the environment *and* a critical local economic mainstay.

Already, locals have welcomed the program with open arms—calling it a “horizon of hope” for the entire community.

## In Lebanon...

Last summer, nearly 800 youth enjoyed welcome respite from the social, political, and economic challenges of their day-to-day existence.

These children—including native Lebanese as well as refugees from Syria and Iraq—bonded with their peers at the Salesian Youth South Camp, held in a serene mountain location in El-Houssoun. Missionaries offered day classes, sports, and other enriching activities for participants, who ranged in age from 6-15, and who came from both Christian and Muslim families. When offered the chance to just be kids again, campers quickly forgot their daily worries and rediscovered their innate sense of joy.

“It’s impressive to see it on their faces!” the missionaries exclaimed.

Amid so many challenging circumstances in the country, our missionaries in Lebanon remain focused on sowing trust, giving hope, and providing help. This camp is just one small example of all three.



## In Samoa...

At Don Bosco Technical Center in Alafua, missionaries offer subsidized or free education to village youth whose families otherwise could not afford to send their children to school.



Such opportunities are increasingly important, especially for students who previously had been excluded from traditional educational settings. Samoa enjoys a relatively strong economy, and demonstrates a commitment to social development though a significant number of rural residents still struggle with the negative effects of wealth inequality—including a lack of livable-wage employment opportunities and gender-based job discrimination. Without marketable skills, uneducated youth face an inescapable cycle of poverty.

At co-educational DB Tech, students aged 16-22 can train in carpentry, welding, sheet metal fabrication, auto mechanics, sewing, and more. And their education pays off. According to the Samoan Qualification Authority, the center graduates the highest number of students who go on to work in the private sector.

## Missionary of the Month: Father Barnaba Le An Phong

Father Barnaba Le An Phong is the newest Provincial of the Vietnam-Mongolia (VIE) province, and he has a dream: to galvanize fellow missionaries to serve youth with their whole hearts, so that youth can find the courage to pursue dreams of their own.

It’s an ambitious goal. It’s also one that promises exponential returns. More than 350 Salesians serve across 38 communities in the VIE province alone. Just

imagine how many young people will be inspired by Fr. Barnaba’s decision.

Once a Formator for aspiring Salesians, Fr. Barnaba has the experience and philosophy to succeed. “It is the testimony of a life worthy of a vocation, to live an example of sacrifice, of listening, service, communion, and understanding, and building a right and positive relationship with the young,” he believes.



Appointed for the six years between 2021-2027, Fr. Barnaba also has time on his side. Please join us in praying for his fruitful leadership.

## Joy to the World

Dear Friends,

Each year at this time, I reflect on the things I’m most grateful for.

I also remember those around the world who won’t experience the joy of Christmas. Families who lost their homes and livelihoods to disaster. Kids orphaned or abandoned through no fault of their own. Youth with few prospects who turn to the streets for solace. Their stories could be heartbreaking ... yet so many of them write new

chapters thanks to you!

That’s why, among the many blessings I count this year, *you* top the list—because your love and generosity help us restore joy amid so much misery.

From Bolivia to Ecuador, Ethiopia to Samoa, you can find examples of how we do that here. You might even “see” the joy reflected on people’s faces, just as our missionaries did in Lebanon.



Thank you for reminding me that the true meaning of Christmas lies not in what we receive, but in what we give.

With sincere gratitude,

*Fr. Gus Baek*

Fr. Gus Baek, S.D.B.



**SALESIAN MISSIONS**

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