

# SALESIAN LECTIO DIVINA - 2

## Theme: Missionaries after the Heart of Don Bosco

1. Read (text given below)
2. Reflect & share (using the given points)
3. Pray (shared prayers, and common prayer at the end as given below)

\*\*\*

### 1. READ (text given below)

Reading from Constitution Art 30 & Art. 6  
and

Reading from Salesian Writings on Don Bosco's Missionary spirit (either from (a) Fr. Vigano's letter **or** from (b) the talk of Fr. Luc Van Looy, SDB

#### A. Reading from Constitutions art 30 & Art. 6 :

##### **Art. 30. People not yet evangelized**

"People still awaiting the gospel message were the special object of Don Bosco's concern and apostolic effort. They continue to stimulate our zeal and keep it alive. We look upon missionary work as an essential feature of our Congregation.

Through our missionary activity we carry out a patient work of evangelization by founding the Church within a group of people. This work mobilizes all the educational and pastoral means proper to our charism.

Following the example of the Son of God, who made himself in all things like his fellow men, the Salesian missionary makes his own the values of these people and shares their hopes and anxieties."

##### **Art. 6. Our Society in the Church**

"The Salesian vocation places us at the heart of the Church and puts us entirely at the service of her mission.

Faithful to the commitments Don Bosco has passed on to us, we are evangelizers of the young, and the more so if they are poor; we pay special attention to apostolic vocations; we are educators of the faith for the working classes, particularly by means of social communication'. we proclaim the Gospel to those who have not yet received it."

In this way we contribute to building up the Church as the Body of Christ, so that also through us she may appear to the world as the "universal sacrament of salvation".

B. Extracts from the Salesian Writings on Don Bosco [Either from (a) Fr. Viganò's letter **or** from (b) the talk of Fr. Luc Van Looy, SDB]

**(a) THE MISSIONARY HEART OF DON BOSCO**

We may safely say that Don Bosco can be listed among the great missionaries of the 19th century, even though he was never personally on the missions "*ad gentes*".

"It can be said", wrote Eugene Ceria, "that the missionary idea grew in him". It is an idea that is intrinsic to his vocational plan as a Founder, and coextensive with his whole existence. At first it was present in embryo and he was hardly conscious of it, but then it gradually took on a form that became progressively clearer and more distinct.

The same thing is said in more incisive or delicate terms by both Fr Paul Albera and Fr Philip Rinaldi, who trace back Don Bosco's missionary vision to his dream at the age of nine. ....

From 1848 Don Rua and others had heard him exclaim more than once: "Oh, if only I had lots of priests and young clerics! I would send them to preach the Gospel in Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego...".

He was often seen, during those same years, looking at a map and heaving a deep sigh at the thought that "so many regions were still lying in the shadow of spiritual death".

When after indescribable sacrifices he was finally able to launch his missions (1875: the Congregation's greatest enterprise!) his missionary heart exulted, and he seemed to give them the whole of his eager attention.: "From then onwards", wrote Don Albera, "the Missions were at the center of his heart and he seemed to live only for them... He talked about them with such enthusiasm that we all marveled and were deeply edified by his burning ardor for souls".

With no less intensity Don Rinaldi, drawing on memories of the distant past, wrote: "In his great heart there had been accumulating for years on end the apostolic ardor of a Francis Xavier, nourished by a heavenly flame that was revealing the future to him through dreams... For me there has never been a missionary as zealous and tireless in his propaganda as he was. I can still see him, the loving Father, in the distant memories of my Salesian vocation, precisely in those years when his missionary fervor was at its height; and it has left an indelible impression on me: he was a true missionary, an apostle devoured by a passion for souls".

But Don Bosco was not satisfied to keep the missionary ideal to himself; he passed it on to his Congregation (and Family) as an essential element of his spiritual and apostolic patrimony. A memorandum he sent in 1880 to Pope Leo XII is quite explicit: "The foreign missions have always been a cherished concern of the Salesian Congregation". It was his wish therefore that his foundation should be also truly missionary "*ad gentes*".

*("The Pope's Appeal for the Missions", Circular Letter of Fr. Egidio Viganò, 24 February 1991)*

## **(b) THE MISSIONARY CONCEPT OF DON BOSCO**

As the goal of missions for Don Bosco can be described under various aspects, we want to have a look at some of the most important ones. These goals are:

***The glory of God.*** As in all his activities, this is his basic concern, He it is clear when we examine the letters to the missionaries... In his homily for the departure ceremony of 1875, the first time Salesian missionaries left for foreign lands, he says: "The Gospel is the same whether preached in one place or in another; in this way we all work for the glory of the same God and Savior Jesus Christ, united in one spirit, even though we may be bodily separated." (MB XI,386-387)

***Search for souls.*** Ultimately all his efforts land on this – his only desire and concern. Since the day of his first dream at the age of nine, in his contacts with the boys of his own age at Becchi, as in the seminary at Chieri, or in the early days of the incipient Oratory, his first and only thought was always for those in need of salvation. ... Before dying, he says to Bishop Cagliero: "Work with all your strength for the salvation of souls." (MB XVIII,477) In the advices to his first missionaries, he starts off saying: "Seek souls and not money, honors or dignities."(MB XI,385).

***Animation of the boys of the oratory.*** By sending out his missionaries, he wanted the whole Oratory to become missionary. The event of the first expedition was lived in a climate of great joy, and we can see that the period (1875) is looked upon as a time of extra-ordinary fertility for the work of Don Bosco and his Oratory. ... At the time of Don Bosco's death, 20% of all Salesians were in the missions. ...

***Evangelization and civilization.*** Today we would say, "Evangelize while educating, and educate while evangelizing"... Giving the young an opportunity to acquire ability and to gain their livelihood in a honest way, and instructing boys in professional trades, in agriculture, in human sciences, and in Christian doctrine was his way of evangelizing them. He wanted to bring along religion at the same time as civilization, faith at the same time as education. This explains the variety of activities in the missions...

There is nothing new, we can say, in his missionary goals if we compare them with his perspectives in Valdocco. This is where his work in Italy proves to be essentially and fundamentally missionary, and where his missionary work proves to be a logical continuation of his basic inspiration. ... In other words, the missionary work of Don Bosco "mobilizes all the educational and pastoral means proper to his Charism" (C 30).

*"Don Bosco and the missions", by Fr. Luc Van Looy, SDB [Salesian missionary spirituality III, Roma – Salesiani, Dicastero per le mission, 1988 – March] (p. 67-86)*

## 2. Reflect

Each one could share on any of the following points:

- Reflections on any specific point heard in the readings
- A personal experience based testimony of one's missionary life
- In what way the 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenges us to be missionaries after the "heart of Don Bosco", in the spirit of the "New Evangelization"?

## 3. Pray

{Short spontaneous prayers based on the reflections}

(Conclude with the following prayer)

### **God our Father,**

we earnestly pray for ourselves and  
for all our Confreres, Sisters and Volunteers  
who are "frontline" missionaries,  
inserted with love and humility  
among the people to whom we have been sent,  
that we may work with faith and courage  
for their evangelization.

### **We humbly implore you,**

that following above all, the example of your own Son,  
your missionary par excellence,  
who made himself in everything like his brothers and sisters,  
we Salesian missionaries may make our own  
the values of the people we evangelize  
and share their hopes and anxieties  
in true spirit of solidarity.

### **Grant O Lord,**

that we as a Congregation and family,  
as we rejoice at the gift of Don Bosco to us  
two hundred years ago,  
may never lose the missionary trend of our beginnings;  
that we be granted the grace to display  
a delicate Salesian charity  
by taking care of the poor and suffering,  
of the young and of vocations,  
just as our Father Don Bosco had done  
and given us an example to follow.

### **Make us, O Lord,**

true evangelizers and apostles  
in these fast changing times in which we live.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord.  
Amen.