



# World Bulletin

Fall 2018

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

## Father Tom and the Power of Prayer

He never doubted God’s love ... but he *did* question his worthiness to be a martyr.

Fortunately, for the Salesian Priest, Fr. Tom Uzhunnalil – abducted on March 4, 2016 during a deadly attack on the Missionaries of Charity in Aden, Yemen – he never had to learn whether his concern was warranted. After 557 days in terrorist captivity, Fr. Tom’s kidnappers released him unharmed.

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.

“I say a big thanks to our Lord for permitting me to be present here, and to thank you all in Jesus’ name ... [He] is our loving God who has heard our prayers.”

During Fr. Tom’s imprisonment, rumors abounded. His fellow Salesians and others feared he had been crucified on Good Friday. When that story proved false – and video clips of the disheveled and ill-looking priest aired – they worried he would perish in captivity.



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 Angelus, 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](http://www.salesianmissions.org/fr-tom)

## This Month’s Child



Name: Óscar  
Age: 11  
Home: Ambato, Ecuador

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.

Shortly before Óscar was born, his parents had fled Colombia’s brutal violence in order to give him a better life. But the murders of their two older sons, and the traumas of escape, left scars that proved impossible to heal. “My mother suffered serious consequences and cannot work,” Óscar explains. “I needed

to help my father.”

Óscar is not alone. Extreme wealth inequality means that more than one million Ecuadoran youth go to work instead of school: a situation our missionaries are working hard to address. In seven cities throughout the country, they offer crucial social support to more than 1,200 children.

At Don Bosco House in Ambato, where his basic daily needs are met, Oscar is delighted to be in school and playing sports with other kids. You can tell by the smile on his face!

## 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.



# Monthly Missions Report...

## In Brazil...

In the heart of the Amazon rainforest, in the indigenous region of Iauaretê, 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 impossibly 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.



Based on the concept of “circular migration,” the project employs former migrants. For instance, a young man fled to Italy, was taken in by the Salesians there, and taught vital agricultural skills. He returned to Senegal and mentored four at-risk youth in establishing a small farm. These youth will learn to cultivate and manage organic crops which they can then sell at market – thereby realizing a steady income stream to support themselves.

If successful, missionaries plan to use the project as a replicable model for future interventions.

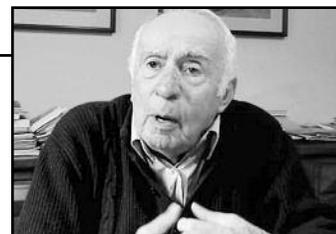
## Missionary of the Month: Fr. Luigi Melesi

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 Vittore 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 prison-



ers 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!

*Fr. Mark Hyde, sdb*

 **SALESIAN MISSIONS** 2 LEFEVRE LANE • NEW ROCHELLE NY 10801-5710

Tel. (914)633-8344

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