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*THE MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR, Card. Ángel Fernández Artime*

Dear readers of the *Salesian Bulletin*,

My affectionate and cordial greetings during this Easter season. In a world in turmoil, agitated by armed conflicts and no small amount of violence, we continue to declare, announce, and proclaim that Jesus is Lord, raised by the Father, and that he LIVES. We strongly need His Presence in hearts willing to welcome Him.

At this same moment, I'm able to look over the content of this month's *Bulletin*, always rich and filled with Salesian life, for which I'm grateful to those who make it a reality. Reading its pages before writing my greeting, I found presented so many Salesian places around the world where Mary Help of Christians has come.



I must confess to you that when I'm inside the magnificent Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco, in this holy place where everything speaks of the presence of God, of the maternal protection of our Mother, and of Don Bosco, I struggle to imagine how those words of the Help of Christians to Don Bosco became reality: "from here" – from this Marian shrine – "my glory will go out to the whole world." (*Hic domus mea; inde gloria mea.*) But thus it is.

In these ten years of service as Rector Major, I've visited hundreds of Salesian presences in the world where our Mother is present.

Now, I wish to speak to you again about my most recent experience. It was on my last visit to our Salesian presences, the one among the Xavante people, that I was able to "touch with my own hands" God's Providence and the good that continues to be done there, as well as among all of us.

I was able to visit several villages and towns in the state of Mato Grosso. I visited San Marcos, the village of Fatima, and Sangrandouro. We also visited some others near these three large centers, including the first settlement we made among the Xavante people. The Xavante are a people who were stricken with diseases and in danger of extinction, but thanks to the help of our missionaries, the medicine they brought, and the dozens of years spent among this people, accompanying them, today the Xavante count more than 23,000 members. This is Providence, this is the proclamation of the Gospel, and, at the same time, it's journeying with a people and their culture, preserved until today, as has never happened before.

I had the opportunity to speak before various civil authorities and am grateful for all that we can do in collaboration for the good of this people and of others. At the same time, I've allowed myself to recall with simplicity, but also with honesty and legitimate pride, that those who've accompanied these peoples for 130 years, as the Church has done – in this case through the sons and daughters of Don Bosco – are worthy of a respected reputation and of attention to their words.

We've done everything we can to join with the voices of those calling for land for these villagers. Accompanying these peoples and defending their land and their Faith (in this case with the Boi-Bororo) led to the martyrdom of Salesian Rudolph Lunkenbein and the Indian Simão in Meruri.

Traveling hundreds of miles by road, I was happy to see so many signs that announced: "Indigenous Reservation Territory." I think this is the best guarantee of peace and prosperity for this people.

What does what I'm describing here have to do with Mary Help of Christians? Well, simply *everything*, since it's difficult to imagine a century of Salesian presence (SDBs and FMAs) among the Xavante Indians without our handing down love for the Mother of our Lord, who is our Mother also.

In San Marcos, all, or almost all, of the villagers, together with us guests, ended the day of our arrival with a procession and the recitation of the holy Rosary. The image of the Virgin was illuminated in the middle of the night and in the midst of the jungle, amid the elderly, adults, young people, and many mothers who carried their children on their backs in large baskets in which the little ones slept as we made our pilgrimage. We made several stops at different neighborhoods of the village. Undoubtedly, our Mother also was walking through the village of San Marcos and, no doubt, through many others also blessing her indigenous sons and daughters.



I can't know for sure whether Don Bosco dreamt of this scene of the Virgin in the middle of the Xavante village, but, without a doubt, in the beating of his heart, lived this desire – for this people and for many others – whether from Patagonia, from the Amazon, or on the Paraguay River.

It's that desire and that missionary dream that's been coming true in the Amazon for 130 years.

On the coming feast of Mary Help of Christians, on May 24, at different times, Mary Help of Christians will be present in the hearts of her sons and daughters all over the world – first in Taiwan and East Timor, then in India, in Nairobi (Kenya), in Valdocco (Turin), in the Amazon, and in the small village of San Marcos. To the world, this is a nothing, but to this people who've come to know the Help of Christians, it's an entire **world**.

Happy month of our Lady. Happy feast of the Help of Christians to all – from Valdocco (Turin) to the whole world.

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