



Thank you Fr. Andrzej Urbański!

Yesterday we got the unexpected news – still without knowing the exact circumstances – that you, our confrere and former Superior General of our Society, returned already to the House of our Father to enjoy eternal life in the nearness of the Divine Saviour.

In that moment, suddenly covered by an air of absence, silence and a profound emotion of loneliness, once again words of Saint Augustin sound inside of us: “*You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.*” Nevertheless, beyond our fragilities, people who live intensely leave traces and their presence among us is not in vain. This is what we feel right now, with the picture of your face still engraved in our mind and our heart full of gratitude for your missionary service beyond all boundaries. This missionary service was a gift of the Spirit, like your important leadership for our Apostolic Society, too.

You were born in the northern part of the globe, but you decided to go to the people of the South, to talk with them about God’s love for all. Fate wanted the end of your life to be among the people you loved, welcomed by the places to which you dedicated the best years of your life. Over there, near to the sea at Bagamoyo, you were called to the great and definitive encounter with the Divine Saviour. We are consoled by the idea that in God’s house you will be accompanied by Fr. Francis Jordan, whose universal apostolic spirit you continuously reminded us of: “... *not to rest content until all people know, love and serve Jesus as their Saviour*” (Const. 103).

One of your biggest contributions in the service of leadership was awakening the fresh breeze of the missionary dimension of the Salvatorian Charism in the Society. You were a Salvatorian that hoisted the flag of expansion in the Society, inviting us to look beyond the limits of our borders. You wanted to see Salvatorians who are open for the Spirit, because none of our Units find their end in themselves, but we form an apostolic body at the service of Christ and the Church. Thank you for awakening in us the wide and profound vision that all are called to take part in an “outgoing Church” to bring the light of the Gospel to all nations and cultures without excluding anybody.

With your big sense of humour, you knew how to call all by their name. You told many stories about your trips on plains, mountains and rivers, but mainly about your fascination by wild animals. Joking, you used to say to be a friend of big lions. Maybe because you shared with these creatures their power and bravery, when looking for initiatives to start in our Units and for the fire of the Salvatorian Apostolic Mission. As the Apostle Saint Paul stated: “*You have fought the good fight, you have finished the race, you have kept the faith...*” (2 Tim 4, 7). Thank you for indicating by your life itself certain irrevocable elements of our vocations to be an outgoing Society, with a universal vision, a missionary service and committed with our life in favour of others.

Now you are in the fullness of God’s light, and we only can say goodbye full of gratefulness for your missionary vision and for having given your whole life to follow Jesus in the Society of the Divine Saviour. Nothing will erase your witness in our memory, that will remind us always that Salvatorian Charism is a long adventure without return. Thank you for encouraging us to come out of ourselves to become authentic tools in Gods’ hands. Thank you for helping us to walk until reaching the point we have arrived at today.

What would you say to us if you would come back? Continue going on in the footsteps of spiritual life and with the apostolic zeal of our Founder. Keep alive and updated the Salvatorian missionary charism. The mission has to penetrate the hearths of all and transform us from inside. Don’t allow that limits or obstacles would hinder you to dream great things. Make visible the Founders’ recommendations to live in unity and community in diversity. Continue to work together with all your strengths to make known the Divine Saviour in all places and on all occasions.

Milton Zonta SDS
Superior General