

Our mission gives hope to millions of youth around the globe.



2024 ANNUAL FUND

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“Jesus, on this day, at this time, I ask you to accompany me, save me, care for me, and protect me.”

Will you help answer the prayer of child laborers in the Dominican Republic?

Dear Friend,

This is a bittersweet letter to write ... for it is my last one to you as interim director of Salesian Missions. Yet I write with joyful anticipation for what's ahead. That's because I'm passing the torch to **Father Michael Conway** – a seasoned and capable leader and colleague whose Salesian heart beats in unison with Don Bosco's.

Like our patron saint before him, Fr. Mike has dedicated his vocation to the young. With decades of experience as a school administrator and youth minister, he instinctively understands what children need to achieve their God-given potential. And the business acumen he honed as provincial treasurer in New Rochelle means he will steward your loyal friendship forward ... responsibly and with great care.

You'll be hearing directly from Fr. Mike very soon. In the meantime, I hope you'll consider a humble parting request from me.

Will you help Fr. Mike begin his tenure knowing he can depend on your support?

But don't just do it for Fr. Mike ... or for me. Do it for kids like Edwin ... *who starts every morning with a prayer that Jesus will shield him from harm.* Edwin lives in the Dominican Republic, where poverty is so profound that thousands of kids like him regularly take to the streets.

They shine strangers' shoes. They hawk fruit from roadside stands. They wash cars, sweep sidewalks, and perform whatever odd jobs they can find. They do it to avoid having to steal in order to eat. **But what they experience is even more distressing.**

Drug deals. Gang violence. Human trafficking. Even worse, they must defend themselves against murderous thieves whose own desperation drives them to kill ... *all for petty change!*



It doesn't have to be this way. A better future is possible.

In Santo Domingo alone, more than 340 million child laborers work on the streets every day. The situation is so rampant that there's even a name for these kids: *Canillitas*.

This is why I pray you can help today. With the holidays just behind us, it's hard for me to ask for one more gift, but I assure you that **\$8, \$11, \$13** or whatever you can afford to give, will have a tremendous impact on the lives of these children.

At *Canillitas Don Bosco* in Santo Domingo, they use a proven approach honed over 40 years.

(over, please)

We are depending on your generous response. Your donation will benefit Salesian programs around the world for needy children and their families. Some of our public education efforts are accomplished through our solicitations, such as the one you are now reading. If you specify your gift for a specific country or missionary every effort will be made to follow your request, but it will be up to the discretion of the Mission Office Director to apply funds where they are most urgently needed. This is to ensure your contribution will be an allowable deduction under IRS codes. We respect your privacy and decisions. Contact us to clarify or modify any mailing preferences you may have.

There is no contribution required to be eligible for the Sweepstakes. Your odds of winning depend on the number of entries received. The average number of entrants is 200,000. Winners are randomly selected from a pool of all received tickets, by the Mission Office Director or an assistant Salesian clergy member. Cash prizes are awarded in one lump sum. We will notify you by telephone or certified mail, if you have won. Winners are listed in our magazine, "Salesian," and on our Website. To obtain a winners list send us a stamped, self-addressed postcard or envelope or email us at info@salesianmissions.org.

First, they meet children where they are. Next, they welcome them into a safe environment away from the streets. Finally, they offer traditional and technical education – complemented by wraparound support – that empowers at-risk youth to build productive, fulfilling lives.

Your gift today helps sustain this transformative work – in Santo Domingo and around the world. And even a modest contribution makes a meaningful difference:

- A gift of \$8 will buy books and other school supplies for classrooms for children who would otherwise not get an education.
- A gift of \$11 can provide hot, nutritious meals to children struggling with food insecurity.
- A gift of \$13 will provide medicines, clothing, and basic necessities for working children who have no one to provide for them.

You are such a valued friend and I know that you will do what you can to help. It means a lot to me – as well as all of our missionaries – that you continuously demonstrate such compassion and concern, and I would consider it a blessing to send you a token of my appreciation.

For your donation of \$11, you will receive an assortment of ten all-occasion Greeting Cards. They are so convenient to have on hand when the need arises to show your friends and loved ones how much you truly care.

And if you have the means to send \$13, you will receive the laminated-cover version of our brand-new 128-page poetry book, “Your Beauty Surrounds Me.” I’m sure you’ll find many moments of peaceful reading within its pages of inspirational verses and full-color, original artwork.

Please know that your kindness will comfort even more precious kids like Edwin as they work to change their lives. Thank you for giving them the hope they so deserve.

With gratitude for your friendship, I remain faithfully yours,

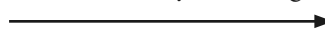


Father Timothy Ploch, S.D.B., Interim Director

P.S. As yet another way of expressing my gratitude and encouraging your ongoing support, I’ve enclosed free Sweepstakes Tickets for our March 31, 2024 Grand Prize Drawing. And, if you return your tickets by February 29, 2024, you’ll have a chance of winning our Early Bird prize. A donation is not required to be eligible, but I hope and pray you can help us during this critical time.

I've also enclosed a free copy of our newest Inspirational Book for you to keep or give to a loved one. I hope it helps bring joy and hope into your life. Please remember to pray for our missionaries and the poor children they work with. Be sure to write your own prayer requests on the back of your Reply Form and send them to me.

You can help now by making a safe online donation by scanning this QR code with your smartphone



Or by visiting us at: www.salesianmissions.org/relief

A Three-Pronged Approach



Meet Them

First and foremost, outreach workers meet child laborers where they are. Each day, they fan out onto the streets, introducing themselves, getting to know the kids, and building rapport and trust.

These workers proceed with such interest and investment that youth “never forget the name of the first educator they encounter,” says Fr. Linares in a recent documentary about the program.

For young Aquiles, it was Carmen. For Cristóbal, it was Puma. In fact, since 1985, more than four thousand at-risk girls and boys like them have willingly left the streets behind ... thanks to the initial and memorable concern of a *Canillitas* staff member.

The staff also works closely – and respectfully – with the parents of their students. It’s with their permission and oversight that these mentorships have the best chances at success.

Welcome Them

Youth who agree to learn more about *Canillitas Don Bosco* discover a safe – and fun – environment where they can rediscover their lost childhoods.

They play sports, meet new friends, and hear about the future opportunities of full-time enrollment. But there’s never any pressure: an important foundational principle upon which the entire program is built.

Many kids are reluctant to give up their work, and understandably so; they’ve known nothing else. *Canillitas* never forces kids to choose. They are free to come and go as they please. Ultimately, with patience and gentle guidance, staff help them see the value of spending more productive time off the streets and less time toiling on them.

And that’s when they move on to the next step.



Educate & Accompany Them

When ready, participants enter traditional schooling or a vocational training program.

Younger children learn to read, write, and do math. Older students develop in-demand skills that place them at the pinnacle of the local job market. In fact, according to city leaders, when companies learn that a potential employee trained at *Canillitas Don Bosco*, that candidate becomes their first choice.

In all cases, youth pursuing their education here feel valued and accepted, which helps develop confidence and self-esteem. In turn, this fuels their desire to succeed in the classroom and envision brighter, more hopeful futures.

Finally, *Canillitas* also provides meaningful material support, which removes the pressure to choose work over school. Students and their families receive food, health care, family counseling, and more.



Nurturing Lives with Dignity

On the streets of Santo Domingo, precious kids are being robbed of their childhoods. Their poverty is so profound that young kids regularly take to the streets: working odd jobs for long hours, just to earn a few pennies.

Generational poverty has created a culture where child labor not only is normal, it's encouraged. Nearly **340 million** vulnerable kids live this sad reality every day.

At *Canillitas Don Bosco*, youth discover a different way forward. "In every child you see washing windshields, we see an automotive mechanic," explains founder Fr. Juan Linares.

Together with his highly trained staff, Fr. Linares empowers child laborers to transcend their current circumstances and fulfill their God-given potential to live lives of dignity and purpose.

To see what this program means to the real kids of *Canillitas Don Bosco*, watch the uplifting documentary by award-winning director Raúl de la Fuente on our website at: salesianmissions.org/childlabor-dr

or scan this QR Code:



Our mission gives hope to millions of youth around the globe.



A Tradition of Caring... A Record of Action!

- Nearly 30,000 Roman Catholic Salesians serving the youth of the world in more than 130 countries.
- They work in more than 150 Hospitals, Clinics and Dispensaries, 330 Orphanages and Shelters, 80 Colleges and 5,500 Schools and Youth Centers, nearly 1,000 Trade Schools, and more than 40 Agricultural Schools.
- The Salesians give their lives and their work freely and receive no salary.
- If you or someone you know is interested in joining the Salesians, please write for information.
- You can help our work with your prayers. Please pray for our missionaries and their work for the poor.
- For more information about our work, visit our website at: www.salesianmissions.org

Working to End Child Labor



*Canillitas Don Bosco
Santo Domingo,
Dominican Republic*