

***Our Salesian Missionary Giovanni Garcia (18 years old) was assigned to work with Guayaquil's Streets Kids.***

Everything started almost two years ago when Giovanni Garcia (Gio) asked to become a Salesian Volunteer. His motivation to be a volunteer was clear--he wanted to be a role model for children who do not have anyone in their lives. This idealism was discovered after he went to Tijuana in a Mission Trip when he witnessed the poverty that the children live in.

Soon after he got more involved in our youth ministry and even participated in the Mission Trip to Miami. He then was invited to participate in a Salesian Missionary Retreat in New York, where he deepened his knowledge about our Salesian Missionary world.

On August 28<sup>th</sup> he joined 80 young people in Ecuador (18 years old most of them) who



wanted to become a volunteer as well. It was a beautiful experience to see all these young people ready to give up one year of their lives to serve God.

On the day of the retreat, Gio was so excited to see all these young people who believe what he believes.

Salesian Volunteer from Ecuador! (Gio is in the top row)

On the retreat he had the opportunity to learn something from the Ecuadorian culture. Gio in the past discovered he did not like "Yucca" which is a root that is eaten in Ecuador. Well in the retreat, he had to eat yucca almost every day! He would eat it all with no complains. I bet by the end of this year he will love the yucca.

On the retreat he shared with his peers his excitement, preoccupation and fears about his mission trip. This sharing process helped him realize that he was not the only one who felt like that way. Almost all the missionaries where excited albeit frighten.

But all of them where ready to go and change the world!





On the day of the Commissioning Mass, all the young missionaries were wondering where they will be sent to.

Fr. Marcelo Farfán the provincial from Ecuador was the main celebrant of this beautiful moment. The church was full of people all gathered for one reason—to pray that may God accompany these young people in this new and excited mission.

Gio was one of the last from the group called to receive his assignment. Gio always wanted to work with street kids. However, he was open to be sent anywhere he was needed. At the moment that Fr. Robert called his name; he was really excited and anxious to know where God will be sending him.

When Fr. Robert said “Giovanni you will be sent to work with the streets kids from Guayaquil,” Gio jumped of happiness and with tears in his eyes, he embraced the provincial with a bear hug. He was being sent to the place he always dreamed of.

The same night Gio boarded a bus along with several other teenagers who were assigned the same location. On Monday September 1<sup>st</sup> Gio started to work with the street kids in Ecuador. His job consists of recruiting them first from the streets and then convincing them that there is a better life than getting high from cement glue. After the recruiting process, he will teach them Math and English.

Gio is excited because he knows that he is transforming not only the life of street kids but also the world with his job. In the meantime we are here as a community praying for him and challenging young people to follow Gio’s steps.

