

January 3, 2012 - Ethiopia - Don Bosco in Ethiopia among the young - 3



(ANS – Gambella) – The solemnity of Christmas was celebrated at Gambella, Ethiopia, with great fervor. Making it an even more memorable occasion was the presence in those days of Don Bosco’s relic.

On December 24 the plane carrying the relic in a fiberglass statue of the saint made a memorable landing in the early afternoon at Gambella airport, where it was received by a welcoming party of priests, religious, and lay people led by the vicar apostolic of Gambella, Bishop Angelo Moreschi, SDB.

A fleet of cars accompanied statue to the city cathedral, where many of the faithful were gathered. They gave a special welcome with traditional dancing and singing. Before the people entered the cathedral, the procession drove slowly round it. Then Bishop Moreschi incensed the statue and said a few welcoming words, invoking the blessing of the saint on all the people the clergy and the young people of the vicariate.

Among those present was the deputy governor of Gambella, who in his address thanked Don Bosco and the Salesians for their precious contribution to the development of the region and, in particular, for their work on behalf of the young.

A prayer vigil followed led by the various associations in the parish.

During the Christmas Day celebration Bishop Moreschi spoke briefly about the life and work of Don Bosco and invited the young people to imitate him. At the end of the Mass the statue was taken to Don Bosco School, where, after midday about 2,000 youngsters gathered to celebrate. Salesian Fr. Giorgio Pontiggia, who is engaged in the work of the vicariate apostolic, spoke about Don Bosco and his dedication to the young.

The day ended with a prayer meeting for the youth workers in Gambella on the theme “The pastoral passion of Don Bosco.” On this occasion, the Salesians who are working in the area renewed their religious profession.

On December 26 the statue and relic left for Addis Ababa.