

SALESIANS 2010





Thanks to

Editorial team:	Fr Filiberto González Plasencia and members of the SC Department
Translators:	Francesc Balauder SDB Vincent-Paul Toccoli SDB Alejandra Flores Carmelita Ruvalcaba Igor Gomes SDB Hilario Passero SDB José Enrique Sobrero SDB Nicolás Echave SDB Juan José Bartolomé SDB Rocco Ragone SDB Julian Fox SDB
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For further information:	redazionerivistesdb@sdb.org

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**Dear Salesian confreres,
Members of the Salesian Family,
Friends of Don Bosco:**

God loves the young and he manifests and expresses this love in many ways. One of these ways is through the Salesian Congregation in 130 countries around the world. More than 16,000 Salesians dedicate their lives to this, along with countless lay people who share our spirit and mission. I have reason, then, in all humility and with a great sense of hope, to say that the Salesian Congregation is a body which is fully alive, called to continue to be a sign of hope for the young.

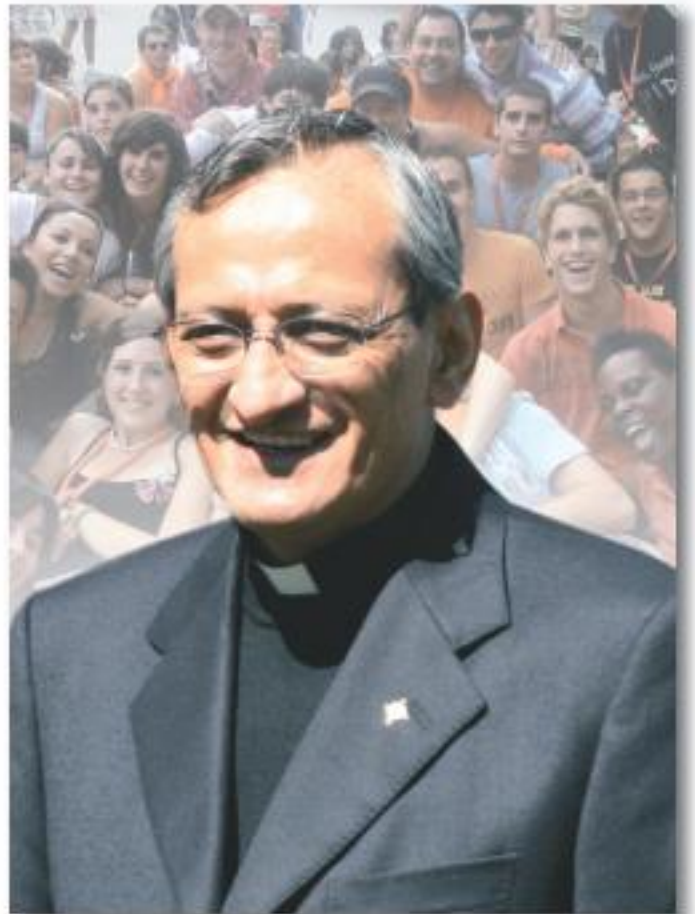
The Salesian Congregation, which came about through God's initiative 150 years ago has, since its beginnings, sought to create a grand movement involving any person interested in the education and evangelisation of poor and neglected youth. This fact urges me to offer you this magazine whose articles offer an insight into the everyday energy and dynamic of the Salesian Mission which you are all part of in very different but ever generous ways. Through it may you come to know the good being achieved for these needy youngsters around the world, most of them unknown, but no less loved for all that.

Thank you for your life. Thank you for your generosity. May you receive the wonderful blessing that Don Bosco gave to his sons, friends and benefactors, the blessing of Mary Help of Christians.

Affectionately in Don Bosco,



Pascual Chávez Villanueva
Rector Major of the Salesians





Rector Major



A happy anniversary

As soon as the 26th General Chapter had finished, I invited Salesians and Salesian Family members to celebrate a new grace-filled event: the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Salesian Congregation by Don Bosco.

On the evening of the 18th December 1859, At the Oratory of St Francis of Sales, Valdocco, Turin, some young men gathered in Don Bosco's room "with the sole purpose of preserving and promoting the spirit of true charity needed for the work of the Oratories for neglected young people at risk". "The gathered group", wrote the on-the-spot appointed chronicler, "then decided to form a society or congregation with the aim of promoting the glory of God and the salvation of souls, especially of those most in need of instruction and education, while providing members with mutual help towards their own sanctification." So we can consider 1859 as the year of our Congregation's birth.

The Salesian Congregation was set up from the beginning by young men from the Oratory who allowed themselves to be caught up in Don Bosco's apostolic passion and by his programme of life.

Thanks be to God this anniversary has become a real spiritual and pastoral journey, beginning with the Solemnity of Don Bosco on 31st January 2009, and it will culminate on 18th December 2009 with the renewal of profession of all Salesians throughout the world. With the renewal of the gift of their lives, Salesians, as was the case with Don Bosco, would like to reassure young people of their commitment to accompany them by becoming their attentive friends and authoritative guides, while they make every effort to put God in prior position at the core of their apostolic life.

This celebration of the 150th anniversary has in fact given us a chance to renew and deepen our awareness of our identity as consecrated persons, vowed to give God primacy, and to follow the obedient, poor and chaste Christ, fully available to the Spirit, and therefore totally dedicated to youth. This is an identity to be lived joyfully and to be visibly manifested through evangelising zeal, love for the salvation of souls, pastoral thrust in-



spired by Don Bosco's programme of life "da mihi animas, cetera tolle". Our identity has to be manifested, then, in the fire of apostolic passion.

The commemoration has made us more conscious of a fact of undeniable importance. The Salesian Congregation was set up from the beginning by young men from the Oratory who allowed themselves to be caught up in Don Bosco's apostolic passion and by his programme of life. During 2009 we have recalled and told the story of the beginnings of the Congregation to young people, a Congregation of which they, I would have to say, have been, "cofounders" along with Don Bosco, and this has urged us on to even greater apostolic commitment to the salvation of other young people. The apostolic involvement of the young is natural ground for growth of the



Salesian consecrated vocation. So many young people around the world, beginning with apostolic involvement, allow themselves to be fascinated by this vocation. We have rediscovered the courage, then, to propose the consecrated Salesian vocation to young people!

It is my hope that these six years which we began with the celebration of the 150th anniversary of our Society, will become a true time of grace which will lead us to rediscovering personal holiness as the best gift we can offer the young and the passion to accompany them in life as trusted friends.

*Fr Pascual Chávez
Rector Major*



A Project for the Future

If GC26 had "charismatic identity and apostolic passion" as its overall sub-theme, the animation project subsequently put into action aims at highlighting our identity in a special way. And the first priority to achieve is the "return to Don Bosco in order to start afresh from him".

Going to the sources of the charism and our identity is for us the desire not just to be faithful to the past, but also a commitment to discover the road to the future. We know that for organisations identity is seen as a central and determining factor for vitality and success. For us too the robustness and intrinsic strength of our own sense of identity guarantees the sustainability over time and the meaningfulness for the world of our Congregation.

Along these lines, the 'provocations' coming from our more immediate calendar of events, like the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Congregation celebrated in 2009, the centenary of Don Rua's death celebrated this year, the coming three years in preparation for 2015, the bicentenary of Don Bosco's birth, are all powerful stimuli which must be of interest to every confrere and for all our structures.

(10)

Mission is shaped by identity; the mission through which we want to respond to the needs of confreres, collaborators and those who benefit from our work, while respecting cultural specifics in different countries and contexts and at the same time stimulating a spirit of initiative so everyone can feel that he or she has a part to play and shares responsibility with the Congregation.

The return to Don Bosco in order to start afresh from him, the urgent need to evangelise, and new frontiers offer us a vision for our future path, one that the entire Salesian community is committed to following.

Warming the hearts of the confreres – as I have often said – means proposing a wise and even mystagogical way forward, a path which,



walked first by ourselves in order to then walk it along with the young, becomes an authentic spiritual journey marked by three "locations": spirituality, communion, mission.

The urgent need to evangelise means seeing the entire world as a mission field, through the eyes and with the heart of the educator, aware however that there is no authentic evangelisation which does not touch the very soul of culture.



The urgent need to evangelise means seeing the entire world as a mission field.

New frontiers, finally, stand for a world where young people are marginalised and in difficulties, something which provokes us and calls us to respond, clear as we are about the criterion of predilection: "giving more to those who have less", with its imperative to go beyond our walls to find new ways of opposing the evil which entrammels their lives, their process of maturing, their self-achievement, their happiness as young people. We do this through a specific educational project set up within the ambit of human rights. In other words, the moment has come for us to be innovative in our educative and pas-

toral service, and this means a change of mindset offering directions for processes to put in place, and refocusing our aim on those to whom we are sent.

Like Don Bosco we need to be attentive and sharp readers of our own times, make his apostolic imagination our own and seize his courage for an action that is not merely palliative but transforming. As it was for Don Bosco it will all be possible, so long as our minds and hearts are full of passion and we set ourselves to the task. Our basic asset continues to be all our personal resources together, meaning, each of you, each of us.

*Fr Pascual Chávez
Rector Major*

Remaining faithful by evangelising

This year, to celebrate the centenary of the death of Fr Michael Rua who was most faithful to Don Bosco and his charism, I have invited the whole Salesian Family to act as a true movement of disciples and apostles of Jesus who are committed to the evangelisation of the young. This is how I wanted to take up the challenge of helping young people today "to look upon others not only through their own eyes and feelings, but as Jesus Christ would" (Benedict XVI).

As Salesians we perceive "evangelisation as the principal requirement of our mission".

Evangelisation is a pressing obligation which we take to heart. As Salesians we perceive "evangelisation as the principal requirement of our mission, aware that the young have a right to have Jesus proclaimed to them as the source of life and promise of happiness now and in eternity" (GC26 n. 24). In the proposal "to live our lives as Jesus lived his..., the proclamation of Jesus Christ and his Gospel should be at the centre, together with the call to conversion, acceptance of the faith, taking one's rightful place in the Church; then, from this, faith journeys and forms of catechesis, liturgical life and the witness of charitable work will come".

The Salesian Sisters have also recognised the motivation and power of evangelisation in the love of God: "The Upper Room, where the apostles found themselves all together, is not a stable dwelling, but a launching pad. The Spirit transformed them from fearful human beings into zealous missionaries full of courage who carry the glad tidings of the Risen Jesus throughout the world. Love drives one to exodus and to go out of oneself to the new frontiers as self gift: love grows by means of love (Benedict XVI). Mary teaches us from the Upper Room to throw open the doors and she was the first to experience this exodus and set out on her journey. The first to be evangelised become the first evangelisers. By bringing Jesus to others she offered her service, brought joy, the experience of love" (GC22 n 33).

But to evangelise young people today, we need to first discern amongst their many inspirations the true though not always well perceived desire "to see Jesus". If we do



not do it, who will present the dreams and needs of the young to Jesus? Who will get the young to see Jesus? Members of the Salesian Family are called to listen to the yearnings of the young to encounter Jesus and, at the same time, to read the circumstances of the young so as to highlight the desire they have to approach Jesus. This is our way of helping Jesus today to save the young.

Only the disciple who lives in close touch with Jesus, can facilitate access to him.

However to become apostles we must first become disciples. Philip, Andrew and the other members of the first apostolic group were called by Jesus, one by one, by name: "so they came to him", the twelve: "they were to be his companions and to be sent out to preach" (Mk 3:13.15b-16a). And to go to Jesus, they had to draw apart from the people following him, to follow him as he went up the mountain alone. Whoever is invited to be with





Jesus and preach in his name does not belong to the group looking for him, but is part of the group of those who have encountered him and have decided to stay with him.

The first mandate the apostle receives is to share his life with the Lord. In the apostolate this kind of sharing precedes being sent; his company comes before preaching. Before the Gospel takes possession of their minds and is the cause of their labours, it needs to be accepted in their hearts. Jesus does not entrust his Gospel to someone who has not given his life to him (cf. Acts 1:21-22). The first to be sent out by Jesus were his first companions.



And because they had been with him the people who wanted to know Jesus approached them. The desire to find Jesus led the crowd to go looking for his disciples. Only the disciple who lives in close touch with Jesus, can facilitate access to him for those who desire this. This explains the urgent need young people feel to encounter disciples of Christ who will bring them to him just because these disciples are with him.

*Fr Pascual Chávez
Rector Major*

Europe as mission

Multireligious, multicultural, multiethnic, post-Christian Europe today is no longer the Europe where the Salesians came into being, and where we have worked for a good 150 years. The process of 'secularisation' within communities, the inexorable ageing of confreres, the scarcity of new vocations, the weight and complexity of so many of our educational structures and a certain apostolic weariness have weakened missionary energies and the charismatic robustness that characterised us.

For Salesians, evangelising the new Europe has become both a challenge and a programme. Taking its inspiration from reflection on the circumstances of consecrated life in Europe and the needs of the young GC26 accepted my proposal, which thus became a "project of the Congregation"(GC26, p. 147). Through it "we share the Church's concerns for the fate of the Gospel in the Western world and, in particular, in Europe. ... It is an invitation for us Salesians to 'direct increasing attention to education of the young to faith' (*Ecclesia in Europa* n. 61)". (GC26 n 99)

Convert holiness into a personal programme of life.

There are four challenges to face up to in the 'Salesian' evangelisation of Europe:

Without personal transformation Europe will not be transformed, a Europe where secularism has had a strong and destructive impact on religious identity, emptied the faith of its social and cultural relevance and threatened the effectiveness of Gospel witness from within. Giving God back his priority in daily life and making Salesian holiness a personal project of life for each confrere must become everyone's strategic commitment. Unless we strengthen our own personal identity we will not become significant. Our witness to austerity and joy are indispensable; this also means choices which run counter to the normal.

It is important for local Salesian communities to set in motion an evaluation process for their work, giving special attention to its evangelising effectiveness and its capacity to experience and give witness to apostolic fellowship.

Evaluating the evangelising effectiveness of our work.

The point of departure and the criteria for our evaluation are the concrete needs of the young, needs that often remain unexpressed or unknown to them and which we need to discern and provide words for.

A more authentic foundation of our Salesian life in God will generate an apostolic and fraternal spirit in our communities and our educative and pastoral communities; and from these renewed Salesian communities there will emerge a theological reading of the needs of the young and our consequent mission amongst them.

Europe presents as being culturally well-equipped, but more convinced than ever of the inevitability of religious relativism. For evangelisation today, therefore, cultural motivations for faith must be expressed and made explicit if they are to survive. The winning hand will be to show the Salesian charism at work through deeds, by preference choosing situations where it is most visible and fruitful.

Redefine Salesian educational presence and make it more explicit.

While re-defining and examining our educative and pastoral offering, there are two criteria to bear in mind: It will be particularly necessary to give special attention to places and settings where culture is generated and passed on, especially schools; and besides, presences which foster personal accompaniment and the flourishing of vocations need to be maintained and strengthened.

Our specific task is to think about a new kind of education, new ways of being close to the young; and this will require new structures. We need however to bear in mind that we are not the only ones that have had to face these problems; many others are involved in doing so, and this is why we should combine our efforts and be open to collaboration.





**Become more European
to be closer to the young.**

It is essential to put in motion a communication process and have an exchange of experiences amongst Salesians and members of the Salesian Family in Europe, foster mutual awareness and encourage real cooperation, the main objective being attention to those to whom we are sent as a priority: disadvantaged youth, migrants, those at risk, etc. We can give importance to integrated projects at the European level in the area of schooling and technical education.

International communities are already a reality in Europe. We need reflection and qualification to be able to best exploit the wealth and possibilities that come from multiculturalism for common life and mission. An increase in international communities needs to be supported and intercultural understanding is urgent.

*Fr Pascual Chávez
Rector Major*

Our Province needed this springtime:

Don Bosco visits in full mid-winter

Dear Fr. Pascual:

Now that our Father Don Bosco has finished his visit to our Province via the relics contained in the Casket designed for the occasion, the Rectors in Chile along with Fr. Provincial and his Council, in the name of all the Confreres in the Province, express their immense gratitude for such an inspired initiative, and for what has been an occasion of pride, emotion, gratitude, recognition, and vocational animation for our Salesian presence.

We know that you were the main one behind this idea, an idea that came to you some time ago as an inspiration. If you could see and feel what we saw and felt in every place our Father passed through, you would have the same feeling of gratitude to God for having given us in Don Bosco a Father and Teacher who transcends time, place, generations and social classes. We have been moved by the simple and sincere affection of so many people who came just to see our Father, friend and good shepherd. They expressed this in many ways and it touched our hearts each time they passed in front of the Casket or came back to tell us something. It was impressive to see young people show their love and gratitude to the Saint with whom they identify in a particular way. The entire Salesian Family was involved in organising and preparing this illustrious visit, experiencing what you asked us to do in the Strenna for this year, making of our Family a vast movement of people.

We have been moved by the simple and sincere affection of so many people who came just to see our Father, friend and good shepherd.

Dear Father, our Province needed this springtime which visited us in full Chilean midwinter. We found light, joy, fidelity, apostolic courage, and recognition of what our presence has meant in this country over the last 122 years, and the commitment to feel responsible for the heritage we have received and for the fidelity and work of so many Salesians in our history.

We are grateful and surprised at how many Bishops in their dioceses, Government authorities, community and organisation leaders expressed recognition of the work of our Congregation and of what the witness of the Sale-



sians and the Salesian Family has meant in our country. We were proud to hear appreciation for the value of the work carried out by such well-known Salesians as Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez and Fr. Egidio Viganó, who held the name of the Congregation high. We assure you that since we are now sought out and recognised by everyone, we are ever more determined to be faithful to the Spirit of our Founder.

We believe that Don Bosco has rejuvenated the "da mihi animas" in us.

We believe that Don Bosco has given us a vocational push forward and has rejuvenated the "da mihi animas" in us to renew our proposal of education and evangelisation. He invites us to renew our witness to the young and the Church and to Chilean society, and our vocational fruitfulness will depend on it. We reiterate our affection and our promise of prayer as you continue to urge us to return to Don Bosco.

*Your Salesian confreres in Chile
Santiago, 29 July 2009*



Only Don Bosco can work miracles like this

I am a journalist. While I was working I was thinking what it might be like to meet Don Bosco personally, but Don Bosco went far beyond what I had imagined. I have seen miracles while Don Bosco went through Chile.

I met him in the Cathedral in Santiago. There was no room left; all places were occupied. Because of work I arrived late. I saw a young man who said he wasn't a Christian go down on his knees when the Casket containing Don Bosco entered, and he was in tears with emotion.

I went to see Don Bosco at the Cathedral, but also for work. I was to write up how young people perceived Don Bosco's arrival. I was supposed to write that young people today are fed up with religion, Church, priests, that they don't go to Mass and that Don Bosco's Casket was just a strategy by the Church to reconquer the young, but I saw the opposite and that's what I wrote.

(18) I saw many young people in tears, trying to touch the Casket. When I finally got close enough to see his face, but I couldn't, quite. Just as well there was the glass cover, otherwise Don Bosco would have stayed in Chile.

There were many young people, past pupils, but also those who didn't know much about Don Bosco. The lady who had read about it in the paper and came to the cathedral in a hurry; the diocesan seminarians, all in cassocks - the pastoral outlook of that diocese is certainly not what Don Bosco's was.

I saw two somewhat poorly dressed youngsters. They told me they work as porters in the parking lot near the Cathedral but they had come in three times to pray to Don Bosco because he was a priest who had done much for young workers.

I spoke to the lady selling flowers at the entrance to the Cathedral and she told me: I have never seen so many young people praying and coming to the Cathedral. And she told me: "Only Don Bosco could work these miracles".

I spoke with three young university students studying at La Repubblica which is secular and run by the Masons: "We came to pray. The Masons offer us good study ma-

terial but only Jesus gives us the strength to live. Don Bosco is a beautiful example of giving our lives for the poor. All three of us are studying law and we want to work in defence of poor young people in Chile". One of them is a Salesian past pupil from Gratiud Nacional; the other two studied in a secular college.

I was becoming aware that Don Bosco not only worked miracles in his lifetime, but the most important thing is that he is working even greater miracles still: giving meaning to life for young people today who perhaps have less meaning to live for.

Perhaps Don Bosco worked his greatest miracle on me.

I saw young people not only singing and clapping, but I saw them with their gaze fixed on Don Bosco, in silence, praying, crying and still praying, in silence Their faces telling of the emotions in their hearts.

I saw many young people, their hands covering their faces as they cried, and I saw young people who wanted to touch him at any cost. I asked one young man why he wanted to touch Don Bosco's Casket: "My mother works all day, money means everything to her but I don't count. I'm just a problem. I wanted to touch Don Bosco to get his caress, because his caresses are real, straight from the heart".

My boss had given me a book so I could read something about Don Bosco, so I could prepare my article better. The author is Teresio Bosco. That evening I went home. I spoke with my two children; gave them a kiss goodnight - something I hadn't done for a long time - and I began to read Don Bosco's life. I have no idea when I fell asleep. I was dreaming of Don Bosco and I was smiling.

Perhaps Don Bosco worked his greatest miracle on me. Young people want life, love life, but true life that comes from the heart.





It is true that today many young people get lost in drugs, consumerism, but Don Bosco works miracles with many young people today also, as he did many years ago with the young Raul Silva Henriquez. When a colleague of mine asked why he became a Salesian and not a Jesuit he replied, "Don Bosco fascinated me".

**Please work another miracle:
remain always in our midst.**

Don Bosco had conquered many young people in our country in those days. May Don Bosco return, may there be many Salesians in Chile today conquered by Don Bosco, loving with the same heart as Don Bosco. May our country have more colleges, more Oratories so that young people may be listened to in the depths of their heart. My two boys are going to amongst these pupils.



Thank you Don Bosco, thank you for visiting us, thank you for giving meaning in life to many young people. Please work another miracle: remain always in our midst.

Author: a Chilean journalist

Meeting of Provincials of the North Europe Region

Provincials from the North Europe Region met in the Salesian seminary in Krakow Between 1-4 May 2009. During these four days, the superiors of 15 Provinces and 2 Delegations worked under the chairmanship of the Regional Councillor, Fr Stefan Turansky, to establish a program for the current 6 year period. Much care and attention was also devoted to Project Europe, adopted by the Rector Major and his Council.

The meeting was also attended by Fr. Adrian Bregolin, the Vicar of the Rector Major, and Fr. Francis Cereda, the Formation Councillor, who drew the attention of his audience to the organization and quality of Religious Life and Salesian Formation.

On Sunday, May 3, all Rectors took part in a Mass concluding the annual celebration of the Salesian Youth Movement of Krakow Province. Savionalia 2009 took place for the 19th time and gathered about 500 young people from the entire Krakow Province, from Lodz (Warsaw Province) and from Lvov (East Circumscription). The Mass was presided over by the General Councillor for the North Europe Region, Fr. Stefan Turansky, and the homily was delivered by the Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr Adrian Bregolin.

The Rectors walked along the path of Krakow's historic places, from the Town Market, through the Mariacki Church and the places connected to Karol Wojtyła, the future Pope John Paul II.

For the young people participating in Savionalia, it was an opportunity to meet Salesians from different parts of Europe; for the Rectors, as stated by Fr. Bregolin, 'it was a great gift: to participate in an Eucharist with the young people, because young people are the reason for our lives, the choice of our lives'. Reflecting on the Word of God, Fr. Bregolin reminded the young people to build their lives on the rock, which is Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who sacrificed his life for each one of us. Referring to Don Bosco, who devoted himself to the youth when fulfilling the purpose of his life, he encouraged them to look for the vocation that God has prepared for all of us.



Despite the intensive meeting schedule, some time was devoted to relaxation and visiting of the beautiful and significant locations in Krakow. The Rectors walked along the path of Krakow's historic places, from the Town Market, through the Mariacki Church and the places connected to Karol Wojtyła, the future Pope John Paul II. This Papal figure further led the participants to Wadowice, where they visited the family home of the Wojtylas and had Evening Prayer in the local Church's baptistery.

After four days of work, prayers and meetings, the Rectors from the North Europe Region returned to their communities happy and enriched, preserving the good memories from the time spent in Krakow.





Formation



Where Salesians are 'made'

The novitiate: A year for learning to be authentic
Salesians of Don Bosco

Do you know where Salesians are made?" a confrere asked a group of boys preparing to meet the novices. A strong image, maybe a bit outrageous, but it says something about a Salesian novitiate.

When a young man, in fact, accepts the call to follow Jesus in Don Bosco's footsteps, a few months of preparation later he crosses the threshold of the novitiate. It is a unique year for his religious formation. Intense prayer, serious well-guided discernment, pastoral experiences and study are the basis for allowing the young man to understand whether Salesian life truly reflects God's will for him.

We are at the entrance to Rome. An international novitiate was re-opened at Genzano in 2000. It is for all the Provinces from Central and Southern Italy and also Portugal and the Middle East. Don Rua had it built in 1896. The first Director of Novices and Rector was the very young Fr Louis Versiglia who then became a missionary, bishop and martyr! He was just 23 years old when he took up this task. He remained in it for 10 years.

"I am convinced that I am in the novitiate by God's grace. We breathe the family atmosphere that Don Bosco wanted. I have experienced the happiness that comes from living and working together. This is the way I want to live"

Which are the "strong points" of a novitiate?
Constant sincere prayer which shows a capacity to be well-based in daily life, experience. Much relevance then is given to community and personal prayer moments, to allow each novice to carry out an authentic discernment of God's will.

Study. In the mornings novices have classes, and in the afternoon – like students around the world – they study. And what subjects? The basics of Religious Life, the Salesian Constitutions, languages (English and Latin), Liturgy, Don Bosco's life and the birth of the Salesian Congregation, fundamentals of Social Communication, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Salesian Family.



Direct contact with the young. All the novices go to the oratory at the weekend and from time to time meet school students. Summer becomes the prime time, however. The novitiate transfers to the South of Italy, in Calabria, to a small village: Natile.

Here the novices animate village life through the summer camp. The village square becomes a Salesian playground. People look on amazed as these young people pray, sing and play with 150 of their children and young relatives! The novices experience – as Don Bosco wanted them to – heat and thirst, fatigue and work, living and working together.

These are two weeks which seal the first approaches to community life experienced by the novices, with all the difficulties and victories of a fascinating year after entering as young men motivated, indeed seduced by Jesus



and where they exit, God willing, as Salesians of Don Bosco, launched forth on a life of self-dedication to the Lord.

Besides what I am telling you, here is what some of my novices have to say:

"I am convinced that I am in the novitiate by God's grace. We breathe the family atmosphere that Don Bosco wanted. I have experienced the happiness that comes from living and working together. This is the way I want to live" (Domenico Muscherà - Italy-Sicily).

"My novitiate? It is friendship and community! A time for growing in friendship with Jesus, for learning how to be silent and to give some room to the Word, the only thing that always speak to us. A time for allowing ourselves to change and to build" (Antonio Lopez - South Italy).

"This year I have experienced more what it is to be a child of God. I have encountered the face of God. It has been an authentic experience of His love for me" (Rubén Escribano Caro - Spain-Madrid).

"In the novitiate we learn to sharpen our senses for perceiving God alone. We learn to see a divine light in our brother's gaze, learn to be humble. It is a totally fascinating year which leads you to want to live with Him, He who "makes all things new". (Stefano Casu - Italy-Central Circumscription).

Angelo Santorsola SDB

The 'story behind the story' motivates formation in EAO

A watershed seminar in January 2007, entitled 'The Story behind the Story', has resulted in an East Asia-Oceania (EAO) region-wide emphasis on formation for Salesians and the Salesian Family, based on solid approaches to Salesian Studies.

The motivating force was the series of talks by Fr Aldo Girauda of the new 'Centro Studi Don Bosco' inter-faculty Centre at the UPS in Rome on the *Memoirs of the Oratory* and the several 'lives' of boys at the Oratory, all written by Don Bosco himself.

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The East Asia-Oceania Region, formed in 2002 from an earlier configuration known as Australia-Asia, has adopted a set of guidelines for formation drawn up by the Congregation's Formation Department in 2005. The past several years have seen the development of a Mobile Formation Team which has taken on the task of writing Salesian Studies courses starting from pre-novitiate formation level, and intense work within individual provinces to ensure critical translations in a number of local languages of key Salesian texts.

Following the Girauda seminar, many provinces took advantage, for their annual Retreats, of men in the Region who have been trained or have wide experience in the



Salesian Studies field. Interest in Salesianity has also been nurtured by the appearance of several books, including the multi-volume *Don Bosco History and Spirit*

series of Fr Arthur Lenti, and the inspirational, posthumously published retreat conferences, *Starting Again from Don Bosco* by Fr. Ian Murdoch.





The formation theme in the Region has by no means been restricted to the formal stages of initial and then ongoing formation for SDBs. Formation has been at the heart of many developments in Youth Ministry, the Salesian Family in the Region. In Korea, the Salesians and the Salesian Sisters, in 2009, worked together to present Salesian life and activity at the 4th National Youth Exhibition in Kwanju. At the other end of the Region in Australia, in late 2008, 110 young adults came together at Dromana Camp for the Annual Youth Leaders Formation Programme, at which SDB, FMA and Lay people work together in a programme which culminates in a va-

riety of apostolic expressions including the Cagliari Lay Missionary Project. In Cebu, Southern Philippines, the Don Bosco Formation Centre and the Don Bosco Technology Centre in Talisay City are moving step by step to realise a vision of establishing an Institute for Salesianity and spirituality to cater to the needs of Salesians, seminarians, lay people and religious.

Andrew Wong SDB

Interprovince collaboration in initial formation

Formation is such a complex thing that today especially it is ever more difficult for one province alone to tackle all the formation tasks in a fully satisfactory manner. Those being formed need good formation circumstances to enhance their human, spiritual, intellectual and apostolic development along with a bountiful community experience.

It is a serious responsibility for a Province to be able to look after every formation stage, because it requires an enormous outlay of resources, well-prepared formation and teaching personnel, adequate number of those to be formed, appropriate settings and materials. Besides, Provinces need to reflect together, exchange experiences, draw up criteria and teaching materials, share common initiatives. So we have become well aware that cooperation amongst Provinces is essential for the initial formation area.

For some time now the Congregation has been implementing various kinds of cooperation. Provinces in each of the eight Regions of the Congregation have a Coordinator who calls together and presides over the yearly meeting of Provincial Formation Delegates. Amongst the many activities already set up in quite a few Provinces is the initiative of a yearly meeting for "inculturated formation" of formators. There are ongoing formation centres in Quito in Ecuador and in Bangalore in India which serve the Regions.

Many initial formation and study centres are inter-provincial. Already, preparation for perpetual profession and various ongoing formation activities are carried out jointly amongst Provinces in a Region. All such initiatives are gradually leading Salesians to a greater appreciation of the benefits of inter-provincial cooperation. In an ever more globalised and multicultural situation in particular, along with inculturation there is an appreciation for the opportunity of inter-cultural formation. At the beginning achieving this cooperation has been difficult, but now the resulting benefits are more and more appreciated.

Recent months have seen new steps in consolidating formation communities and study centres resulting from provincial cooperation in many parts of the Congregation. Other such plans are on the drawing board. Poland



has set up a single postnovitiate for all four Provinces in Lad and a single theological study centre in Kraków.

Already, preparation for perpetual profession and various ongoing formation activities are carried out jointly amongst Provinces in a Region.

The six Provinces in Spain now have a common Novitiate in Granada, Postnovitiate in Burgos and Theology





in Seville. The "European" Novitiate experiences at Pinerolo and the Theologate in Turin are interesting. In Mexico the Prenovitiate for both Provinces is in Irapuato, the Novitiate in Coacalco, the Postnovitiate in Mexico City and the Theologate in Guadalajara. In view of the unification of the five Provinces in Argentina, the two future Provinces now have the Novitiate in Alta Gracia, Postnovitiate in Cordoba and Theologate in San Justo - Buenos Aires.

The countries bordering the Andes are coming together for theology in Bogota where there are already students from Colombia - Bogotá, Colombia - Medellín, Bolivia,

Peru and Ecuador will be added in 2010. The six Provinces in Brazil already have experiences of the kind for all stages of formation. Formation in Africa and Madagascar is being consolidated especially for students of theology, in the communities in Nairobi, Yaoundé and Lubumbashi. The way forward has been charted and these good practices are spreading everywhere.

Chrys Saldanha SDB

Promoting the Salesian Brother vocation

The 26th General Chapter gave new impetus to promoting the Salesian Brother vocation, indicating to the Congregation clear paths to follow.

It invited local communities to foster the presence of Salesian Brothers amongst the young in pastoral and educational leadership roles not just at an administrative and organisational level, and encouraged them to make this vocation known.

It also asked Provinces to foster, where possible, Salesian Brother presence in the various Province animation services, especially vocation ministry, prepare them as formators and make them part of formation communities, support the specific formation of the Salesian Brother, something now happening at Regional and Inter-regional level.

Along with the attention it gave to promoting the Salesian Brother vocation, the 26th General Chapter asked for a profound change of mentality on the part of every Salesian: he is asked to recognise the unique nature of the Salesian consecrated vocation in both its ministerial and lay form. Before the diversity of his vocation and its functions, each Salesian is a consecrated person who has chosen to dedicate his entire life to God, to follow the obedient, poor and chaste Lord, spending himself for the salvation of the young and living in fraternal communities.

Before the diversity of his vocation and its functions, each Salesian is a consecrated person who has chosen to dedicate his entire life to God.

Given that the Salesian Brother vocation is often not understood - his role and purpose is not always presented with adequate emphasis in aspirantates, pre-novitiates and novitiates* (GC26 59) - the Formation Department of the Salesian Congregation has prepared an aid called *The two forms of the vocation to Salesian consecrated life: The Salesian Brother and the Salesian Priest*. The



material, presented as outlines, offers reflection points and exercises. Its aim is to foster sharing amongst pre-novices and vocational discernment.

Following the first part which deals with vocation in general and the three principal forms of Christian vocation, the second part of the aid develops the topic of the Salesian consecrated vocation and its two forms; while the third part offers pre-novices the criteria for vocational discernment; and the fourth part presents an overview of formation curricula.

The Congregation has set up a two-year specific formation period for the Salesian Brother after Practical training. Article 116 of the Salesian Constitutions in fact requires that, following Practical Training, the Salesian





Brother be offered "the opportunity to deepen his knowledge of the spiritual heritage of the Congregation. He receives an adequate theological preparation appropriate to his consecrated lay status". All this is offered to complete his formation in view of his pastoral and educative work.

The Congregation has set up a two-year specific formation period for the Salesian Brother after Practical training.

The three specific formation centres, which have a certain consistency in terms of their programmes and the

number of students involved, are to be found in Valdocco, Turin, Guatemala City, and Shillong in India; to which we can add the centre in Nairobi for Salesian Brothers from English-speaking Africa and one in Manila for the East Asia-Oceania Region. These studies take place in Salesian study centres for clerical students preparing for the priesthood, and they confer a Diploma recognised by the Salesian Pontifical University. They are open to other religious brothers and sisters. It is a case of making these first steps in these experiences, but they already show that they are promising ones.

Francesco Cereda SDB

Salesian studies and knowing Don Bosco

In view of the preparation for the bi-centenary of Don Bosco's birth in 2015, the 26th General Chapter has indicated the way to return to Don Bosco for the Congregation. Amongst other things it has asked for a systematic study and deeper understanding of Don Bosco, meaning his story, spirituality, pedagogy and pastoral activity. It recommended the formation and updating of Salesians, Rectors especially, giving attention to charismatic identity. It asked that the texts which Salesians regard as most important be made accessible in various languages and in digital formats as well, and that the translation and publication of a collection of the main Salesian sources be seen to.

In order to foster studies in Salesianity, the Theology Faculty at the Salesian Pontifical University has set up a degree course (Licence) in Spiritual Theology with a major in "Salesian Studies". The course is directed at Salesians and other groups in the Salesian Family and aims to prepare teachers in Salesian matters, formators for the various Salesian Family groups, animators in centres of spirituality and ongoing formation. It also aims at fostering the use of appropriate research tools in the areas of spirituality and Salesian history.

The 26th General Chapter asked that texts be made accessible in various languages and in digital formats.

A further impulse for Salesian Studies has come from the Regional Ongoing Formation Centres in Bangalore, Berkeley and Quito. The "Regional Ongoing Formation Centre" programme at Quito can be completed in four modules: Each of the first three has a course lasting three weeks and the fourth is a pilgrimage and summary of studies about the Don Bosco places in Turin. It tries to encourage studies on Don Bosco, Mother Mazzarello and the Salesian Family and maintain fidelity to Don Bosco's charism. A similar programme begins this year at the "Don Bosco Renewal Centre" in Bangalore with a first semester of Salesian Studies. Another prestigious centre can be added to these two, the "Institute of Sale-

sian Spirituality" in Berkeley, offering Salesian Family members renewal courses in Salesianity. The centre publishes a magazine, the *Journal of Salesian Studies*.

One of the obstacles to Salesian Studies always has been, and still is, language. Because they lack a knowledge of Italian, many Salesians do not have access to books on Salesianity, and less so Salesian primary sources, mostly in Italian. In recent years an effort has been made to provide translations of important official documents in different languages. In English, the publication of the seven volume "Don Bosco: History and Spirit" by renowned Salesianity expert Fr Arthur J. Lenti, has been a great opportunity.

A further impulse for Salesian Studies has come from the Regional Ongoing Formation Centres in Bangalore, Berkeley and Quito.

Meanwhile work is proceeding on other language translations of important studies for Salesianity. Amongst the more recent we can note translations in Portuguese and Polish of Braidó's two volume *Don Bosco: prete dei giovani nel secolo delle libertà*, and translation in Portuguese of Braidó's, *Prevenire non reprimere*, both indicated as textbooks for postnovitiate and Specific formation. The way is open for translation into other languages of basic resources and works, and initiatives of this kind are intensifying.

Francesco Cereda SDB







Youth Ministry



Stories of hope: Salesian technical education in the East Asia-Oceania Region

The Don Bosco Technical School in Tuol Kork, on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, has some interesting furniture for sale, as discovered recently on a visit to the school by a local Cambodian magazine reporter who wrote: "As you approach the welding department, the sound of construction can be heard and a white man is bent over a piece of furniture. Val Sutherland, 70, is a seasoned engineer with the Australian Business Volunteers (ABV) Programme. Standing back he seems satisfied with the prototype of what seems to be a wooden garden bench with unusual arms and legs. Only after close examination is it obvious that it is, in part, made from AK-47 automatic rifles". A story of hope.

Technical education, preparing young people to earn a living and contribute to society, has its origins in the beginnings of the Salesian charism, from those early days at the Valdocco Oratory.

In Lahore, Pakistan, and in Ulaanbataar, Mongolia, Don Bosco technical institutes this year graduated their largest ever batch of students, not only to the joy of students and parents who now have the comfort of knowing that their sons and daughters will almost certainly find good employment, but also to the loudly expressed satisfaction of Government, who have 'rewarded' these schools and their mentors with praise, and also by facilitating their continued development in various ways. Stories of hope.

Technical education, preparing young people to earn a living and contribute to society, has its origins in the beginnings of the Salesian charism, from those early days at the Valdocco Oratory. The times have changed but not the aims: 'Honest citizens and good Christians' or good Buddhists, Muslims or whatever has seen superb technical education under Salesian inspiration burgeon all throughout Asia and Oceania. Technical education always needs to be adapted to local needs. We find, for ex-

ample the outstanding Salesio Polytech in Tokyo, which has taken over from the long standing Ikuei Polytech and is seen as one of the city's best examples of highly professional technical education. Or we can go to the Don Bosco Technical Centre in Apia, Samoa, regarded as the



foremost technical education centre in the nation. In Legazpi, Philippines, the Salesians run the Don Bosco Agro-Mechanical Technology Centre, where besides responding to the need to teach and demonstrate good farming methods in difficult terrain, the Salesians do what the Bishop who asked them to start the centre first asked of them: "Train youth in employable skills and impart values and attitude formation".

Whether it is turning 'swords into ploughshares' à la Cambodia, or showing young students how to plough, as in Legazpi, or building the latest solar-pow-

ered experimental vehicle as in Tokyo, the aim is the same: this form of education, not only to skills but to deeply human and spiritual values, is meant to be a sign of hope.



Slovak Salesian Family thanks Animators

Action: Animator is name of an event prepared by the whole Salesian Family in Slovakia for their volunteers. The most active young volunteers met in the capital city Bratislava during the weekend 2- 4 October 2009 to experience the power of unity of the Salesian family, meet their good old friends whom they collaborated with for many years and build up some new friendships with others as well, learning something more about Salesian spirituality in the bygoing.

**It was hugely enriching for us in the family.
We really felt we were from one
big Salesian Family.**

There are about 1,500 young leaders working during their free time with children and other young people in Slovakia. They devote much energy, enthusiasm, free time, skills and even more to the long term, regular work with other people without expecting any reward. 800 such volunteers came to Bratislava to participate in the event *Action: Animator*. The Salesian Family wanted to say "Thank you!" during this event.

About 300 families from Bratislava took young volunteers into their homes for the weekend. They gave them not only a bed but also a family atmosphere and acceptance. "It was hugely enriching for us in the family," says Mária Tichá, mother of one of the families. "We really felt we were from one big Salesian Family; we had a lot of common issues."

Volunteers divided into 70 small groups were playing a game in the city after the opening ceremony. They ended the day with adoration in St. Martin's Cathedral.



There were workshops prepared for them on Saturday. "The first block was aimed at practical skills important for animators. After the break we did the second part on the topic of 'Being a leader is a lifestyle,'" explains Zuzana Báboková, coordinator of *Action: Animator*. Volunteers at the Main Square in Bratislava promised to work 308,250 hours this school year for children, young and other people in

need. A huge surprise was also a thanksgiving on the part of young volunteers to the Salesians and Salesian Sisters. They astonished the Salesians and Salesian sisters with an unexpected gift - a T-shirt bearing the slogan: *We believe in young people*. "We put our T-shirt on





immediately and were proud of them. That was our Salesian profession of faith - we believe in God and in the youth," smiles Sr. Renáta Žurková responsible for youth ministry in the Slovak province.

We believe in young people.

There were lots of interesting guests from the Salesian Family at this event. It was opened by Slovak Provincial Fr Karol Manik, the Provincial of the Salesian Sisters, Sr Iveta Sojková and Fr Fabio Attard, SDB Councillor for Youth Ministry. Provincials from other countries - Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary were present for the closing mass. "Don Bosco hoped there would be people like you; people ready to devote their free time to others. To be a leader is a profession and a



calling at the same time! So open your hands, hearts and let's get to work!" appealed Fr Štefan Turanský as he addressed the young leaders and families during the final mass.

*Zuzana Matejičková
Coordinator of SYM PR team*

Confronting poverty by creating public policies on behalf of the young

St John Bosco Province (ISJB), founded in 1947, is a civil society charitable organisation based in Belo Horizonte - MG. Its mission is to contribute to the education and evangelisation of the young with preference for the poorest amongst them. We carry out social and educational activity in the States of Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, Rio de Janeiro, Goiás, Tocantins and in the Federal District.

These social and educational activities are carried out and coordinated by the Salesian Popular Education System (SSEP). In order to achieve this mission, we highlight the following activities: centres for young children (oratories), youth centres, Salesian Centres for Young Workers (CESAMs), working with adolescents with social problems, and education of youth and adults. These activities are coordinated by two programmes which follow the guidelines of PNAS - The National Social Work Plan. The two programmes are the Basic Social Protection Programme and the Special Social Protection Programme.

As part of the Basic Social Protection Programme we have CESAMs - Salesian Centres for Young Workers. Created by ISJB in 1973 in Belo Horizonte - MG, the CESAM offers a real possibility for young people to find work in the labour market. In 1989, UNICEF recognised it as an exemplary social and educational institution. When CESAM began to bring about good results in Minas Gerais, one was also set up in Goiás in 1974, in the Federal District in 1979, and in Rio de Janeiro, in 1985. And finally, in 1996, CESAM was set up in the State of Espírito Santo. It has not stopped there. After two years of Salesian presence in Palmas, in the State of Tocantins, there is a study in place to see if a CESAM is also viable there.

As a socialisation service in the area of social and educational support, the CESAMs educate and evangelise young people who are socially vulnerable, by educating for and through work. Currently there are more than 6 thousand of our young apprentices in the labour market.

Following Don Bosco's maxim, "good Christians and honest citizens", the activities of ISJB aim at the integral



formation of the one being educated. By providing adequate physical structures, we try to foster the involvement of the young people through activities that enable him or her to build their own project of life.

Salesian Centres for young workers educate and evangelise young people who are socially vulnerable by educating for and through work.





As well as the practices that are part of the Salesian tradition such as the Good Night (or Good Day, Afternoon...) and opportunities for celebration, we try to offer them groups and broaden the possibilities of networking.

ISJB networking legitimates its mission by gaining the recognition of government and civil society. It means we are talking of uniting forces to guarantee and promote the rights of children, adolescents and their families. These activities are coordinated taking into account three dimensions: creating public policies which give attention to childhood and youth, forming educators, promoting groups and associations.

These are the strategies we use to promote a more just and equitable society.

Therefore, with approximately 10 thousand children, adolescents and older youth in our care daily, and more than 5 thousand involved in weekend activities (oratories and youth centres), we would maintain that confronting poverty, violence is achieved by planned and quality activities. The ISJB believes in social inclusiveness, in the possibility of a more just, equitable and fraternal world, in the tireless struggle on behalf of those for whom Don Bosco showed predilection.

Moacir José Scari SDB

Technical Professional Schools in Chile:

Serving young people in vulnerable areas

Since 1887 the Archangel Gabriel Province of Chile has been serving the young from the more vulnerable sections of Chilean society in 9 Regions of the country stretching from Antofagasta in the North to Magallanes in the South. The Province has opened 11 technical-professional schools as a way of bringing education, evangelisation and development to the country, especially for young people who need a stable future but who lack the resources to enter the country's various universities.

These schools all receive State subsidies, meaning that families pay only a part of the costs of education for their children.

The current specialist areas for which the students are prepared are as follows: industrial mechanics and/or automotive mechanics in 10 schools; electricity, electronics and/or telecommunications in 9; graphics in 2 and technical design in 1; industrial food production in 1 collective food services in 1; tourism services in 1; accounting in 1. 5% of these are developed under the heading of dual education, meaning that they complete their education with a chance to carry out work experience, in real circumstances.

In educational terms our schools have been a reference point and are in the forefront of the activities that the Ministry of Education establishes for technical-professional education in the country.

It is important to have some data clear: these schools hold 32% of the total schooling population for Salesian Colleges in the country and 2% of all those who matriculate from technical-professional schools, 35% of those who complete their schooling go on to further studies at tertiary level.

Almost all the specialist studies are accredited by the Ministry of Education, meaning that they recognise their technical capacity (management, availability of educa-

tional areas and learning resources, technical preparation of teachers, etc.) to continually improve their management and the results for students who complete their studies. At the same time 55% of these schools have been given the seal of quality for institutional management.



Those who come out of our technical-professional schools are much sought for in their field of work since most businesses seek education to values as much as technical preparation

In educational terms our schools have been a reference point and are in the forefront of the activities that the Ministry of Education establishes for technical-professional education in the country. We are amongst the largest in terms of the number of Church institutions recognised for quality, education for life and employability.

Finally, amongst those who graduate there are many who become businessmen, bosses at the middle and upper levels of the mining sector, tradesmen, artists, politicians and priests.

It is important to highlight that all schools in the Province have an educational project, a strategic tool that helps us to tackle the task of inculturating our charism in different parts of the province through the educational and pastoral service we offer.

We have begun to put into place a multi-disciplinary approach to the pastoral and educational task, where the pastoral aspect plays a major role, and are developing plans and programmes as a way of evangelising the curriculum, enabling the idea of pastorally-oriented school.

Andrea Robles



Youth and work: Preparation for work in Venezuela

Don Bosco was always interested in young workers. He lived at a time when the process of industrialisation in Piedmont, Italy, meant that many youngsters abandoned their families and went to the city of Turin in search of work. He used to gather these young workers on Sundays at the Oratory, visit them during the week, find work in the factories, see that they received dignified treatment and an adequate wage, and he succeeded in drawing up work contracts which recognised their rights as workers. Later he set up technical schools and workshops in arts and trades, so they could be prepared for work, making them good Christians and honest citizens.

After 100 years in Venezuela, the Salesians seek to respond to new forms of poverty emerging in the country: by creating a network of Don Bosco Homes and Youth and Work, a Salesian civil Association for work preparation for street kids and out-of-school children.

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After 100 years in Venezuela, the Salesians seek to respond to new forms of poverty emerging in the country: by creating a network of Don Bosco Homes and Youth and Work, Salesian civil Association for work preparation for street kids and out-of-school children.

As its mission Youth and Work offers involvement in society and work for young people between 15 and 25 years of ages who have remained outside the formal school system and therefore run the serious risk of having nothing to do, unemployment, drugs and delinquency. By learning a trade and with human and Christian formation, they learn to regain self-confidence, confidence in their own skills and abilities, so that at the end of the programme they are in a position to fit into the working world.

The programme aims at their playing a productive part in society, work involvement with public and private enterprise, the setting up of micro-businesses and cooperatives, encouragement for free initiative. Youth and Work links 46 work preparation centres, offering 400 courses

annually for some 10,000 young people. One important sector is made up of 21 centres serving indigenous communities in Amazonas, Delta Amacuro, Bolivar and Zulia, offering courses in Handicrafts, Woodwork, Churuatas and Bongo manufacture, Literacy, Dressmaking, Agriculture.

The 15 community centres are found in popular suburbs offering short courses like Accounting, Secretarial services, Office technology, Hotel management, Administration, Social Work, Salesmanship, Administrative assistant, Pre-school helpers. The 10 industrial centres offer two year programmes in Metalwork and welding, Industrial and automotive mechanics, Plastics, Electricity, Electronics, Refrigeration, Computers, Carpentry and Cabinet making, Computer studies, Shoemaking, Can production.



'Youth and Work' is a network of the Salesian Family and the Church. Besides the Salesian centres, others are run by the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts, the Daughters of the Divine Saviour, Salesian Cooperators, Past Pupils, Volunteers of Don Bosco. We also work with the Vicariates Apostolic of Puerto Ayacucho and Tucupita, this latter belonging to the Capuchins, and with other Religious Congregations like the Marists, Claretians, the Lauritas and diocesan parishes. It is a networking experience which allows communication, articulation and exchange of ideas and resources amongst each of the nodes making up the network.



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Through this programme the Salesians in Venezuela try to support a broad charitable movement in the style of Don Bosco on behalf of young people who are out of school and excluded. Our proposal is that young people who have been rejected by society can be converted into corner stones for their own lives.

It is difficult to find work in our country, but those who do not know what to do find it even more difficult. This is why work preparation is so important.

Our goals are: to consolidate those centres already opened, improve the workshops, renew equipment, re-design the curriculum, strengthen the programme of values formation. People want capable workers but especially honest citizens with good human values.

Another challenge is to accompany those who graduate as they find work as junior employees, teach them their

rights and duties, or help them to find work. We should highlight the recent creation of two work mediation and assessment offices for micro-businesses and cooperatives: one in Caracas and the other in Valencia. It is difficult to find work in our country, but those who do not know what to do find it even more difficult. This is why work preparation is so important.

In the area of projects, we set up links with businesses, institutions and NGOs to support our programme in various ways: donation of equipment, resources, study bursaries, improvement for workshops and courses, finding work, qualifying our formation processes.

Everyone has the right to dignified work and to be prepared for it. We do not want young people to be reduced to begging or asking for alms: we ask God and Mary Help of Christians to bless them, so that in work and through work they may learn how to be active in improving their own lives.

*Fr Raúl Biord Castillo SDB
and Fr Luis Felipe Ramirez SDB*

Don Bosco Technical College Pristina

Light and hope for young people in the young Kosovo Republic

2001. Laying of the foundation stone for Don Bosco Social and education Centre, Pristina. The idea was to build a technical centre and an oratory-youth centre.

October 2003. First technical courses begin, December 2005. The central part of the school complex is completed.

Ours is the only non-State school of the kind in Kosovo.

August 2008. Everything is ready. Difficulties? Many. 2006 was the most difficult year. The usual technical courses for young unemployed and adults did not get off the ground. There did not seem to be a significant presence of young people. It looked like the educational, social and pastoral project was going to fail. Maintenance costs had sky-rocketed.

But September 2006 saw some courageous and ultimately successful choices made. The new Rector and the Salesians set about studying, looking around, asking what direction they had to take for the Salesian educational presence to get started decisively. We put our investment into lay people who had been prepared in situ. Working as a team together we came up with the strategy that it was necessary to integrate technical training, schooling and social work.

How? Networking with local civil and church, State and private institutions; listening to the questions and the needs of the young; monitoring requests from the labour market and social groups; making the quality of Salesian education known as well as the effectiveness of our formation ideas; speaking about and presenting Don Bosco's Preventive System; developing a scholastic approach which linked theory and practice, classroom lessons with exercises and learning in workshops with new and modern equipment.



April 2007, we present the Minister for Public Education with our new scholastic plan to open a technical college majoring in electronics, computer studies and telecommunications. Ours is the only non-State school of the kind in Kosovo.

In September 2007 we began with two sections, and in October 2008 we needed to expand to four then, September 2009, we had to close applications, raising the number of students per class from 28 to 32. Within two





years the number of students at the College will be 450. In recent months the State of Kosovo has recognised the Don Bosco Education and Social Centre as a "centre of excellence", as an example of how to achieve quality schooling and how one can and must work together: religious and lay, teachers of different faiths and gender, state and non-state institutions.

In recent months the State of Kosovo has recognised the Don Bosco Education and Social Centre as a "centre of excellence".

The centre is a broad setup with 4 main sectors:

School, technical education and work promotion: Technical high school/college, Technical Formation Centre, project and consulting office;

Pastoral sector for first evangelisation: a Saturday oratory and daily Salesian youth centre;

Social problems sector: the LA VITA (Life) association;

Salesian Family and vocation ministry section: Salesian Cooperators and a vocations 'come and see' community.

Four ways to bring a smile back to the Balkans!

Matteo Di Fiore SDB

YaR – The Young at Risk

Don Bosco South Asia Forum for the Young at Risk

YaR is a movement with the Young at Risk. 'YaR' in Hindi (the Indian Language) means 'friend' and that is what we are – friends of the 'Young at risk', the priority target group we reach out to: the young people who have been forced into situations of great risk. YaR is a forum of committed and dedicated citizens, organisations and networks, working for the young at risk to empower them and to accompany them to strength, growth and transformation.

YaR reaches out to the following groups of young people at risk: street children, child labourers, school drop-outs, trafficked children, the young affected by HIV/AIDS, calamities, war etc., the young in conflict with law, children in need of care and protection, the physically and sexually abused children, the abandoned and orphaned children, child soldiers and the unaccompanied children.

Challenged by the marginalisation of the young and inspired by Don Bosco, the Salesians in India began a journey of reaching out to this huge population of young at risk (YaR) in a humble way in 1974. The first young at risk mission was a collaborative venture of Salesians with the City Corporation of Cochin for the education and rehabilitation of street children. It became a unique example of society participation and NGO-GOVT collaboration that it inspired Indian Salesians to return to Don Bosco and to the original charism.

The first young at risk mission was a collaborative venture of Salesians with the City Corporation of Cochin for the education and rehabilitation of street children.

As the years passed the different Provinces of Salesians across South Asia began projects to reach out to the young at risk, especially in the urban areas. Each of them turned out to be excellent examples of services for young persons in dangerous situations. By the end of the 1990s the Salesian provinces started setting up commissions in their provinces to animate such missions for YaR. It didn't take long for Salesian Provincials'

Conference of South Asia to establish a forum, which is a network of all the YaR centres of Salesians in South Asia. Thus the Don Bosco South Asia Forum for the Young at Risk became a reality.

Inspired by Don Bosco and challenged by the marginalisation of peoples, especially of the young, we will strive by our attitudes, way of life and actions, to empower the Young at Risk and to create a just and humane society by joining hands with socially responsible citizens and groups.

Mission Statement of YaR:

- We shall incarnate ourselves, as individuals and groups, in locations and communities where marginalisation is more prevalent.
- We shall accompany the Young at Risk in their struggle to grow to fullness in freedom and humaneness.
- We shall provide positive environments that will prevent exploitation and will empower the young at risk to be agents of personal and social transformation.





- We shall create new spaces to grow, live and work together; especially giving priority to participatory, human and child rights perspectives.
- With the young in the forefront, we shall network with other socially responsible individuals and groups in building communities and movements.
- We shall build each of our Salesian settings into dynamic educative pastoral communities and vibrant Salesian Communities.

We will strive by our attitudes, way of life and actions, to empower the young at risk and to create a just and humane society.

95 cities and towns of India are reached with 1079 service units for the YaR. These service units include shelter homes, children's homes, youth hostels, street presences, childline telephone services, HLK/ MCS services, child labour schools, vocational training centres. Groups and movements that are active in this forum are Peer

Leaders units, Youth for Youth groups, Self Help groups, Past Pupils units and over a thousand Caring Community Groups.

While each of the centres of this forum serve the young at risk with tremendous dedication preserving their uniqueness and diversity, the DB YaR Forum networks among them to help them learn from each other. It works to promote among them healthy values and social work practices and brings them together into a single powerful voice on behalf of the young at risk. The forum also supports movements, practices and systems in our YaR centres, to grow into national movements, taking them beyond the boundaries of the forum and share them with other bodies committed to the cause of YaR. We believe that this is the way of impacting the lives of a million children who are at risk.

Finally I am Home

Tuloy sa Don Bosco Street children Village

I look at the sea of faces illuminated by the light flooding through the windows of the altar at my back and my breath caught in my throat: beautiful.

Theirs are not the cherubic, smooth, delicately innocent beauty you would expect of children barely passing the first decade of their life. Deprivation has robbed them of the height, the bulk and intelligence they should possess at their age. Look closer and you'll see traces of untold pain in the tautness of the shoulders, anger in the rigidity of the jaws, unexplained fear in the rapid darting of the eyes. Though marked by these scars of experience and the strain of survival, or maybe even because of it, they are children still and breathtakingly beautiful.

Look closer and you'll see traces of untold pain in the tautness of the shoulders, anger in the rigidity of the jaws, unexplained fear in the rapid darting of the eyes.

They are the 600 children of Tuloy, a Don Bosco Street children Village. Orphaned, abandoned, neglected and poor they would have been frittering their life away on the streets if not for the unbelievable foresight of a saint who lived two centuries ago.

I myself encountered Don Bosco in the presence of the Salesians when I was still in High School. The companionship of the Brothers in the most inconsequential activities like play, outings and the like left a profound impression in my youth. For me it was as simple as they were there, they were with me – playing, laughing even crying with me. I can even say that my heart pattered the rhythm of the Salesian preventive system first before it beat for my vocation as a priest.

But it is my vocation in Tuloy, working for the poorest of the poor that swept me with fascination for both my Salesianity and my priesthood.

For me, Tuloy is more than the accolades, awards and recognition it has received over its 15 years of existence.



It is more than the surprised gasps of visitors as they see the completeness and cleanliness of the facilities of the Tuloy sa Don Bosco Street children Village. It is more than the thousands of children we have assisted over the years and the thousands more we will assist.

Tuloy is where I am confronted by my weaknesses and limitations and I encounter God challenging me to be human and allowing Him to be my God.

Tuloy is where I am confronted by my weaknesses and limitations and I encounter God challenging me to be human and allowing Him to be my God.



FOUNDATION, INC.

Children redeemed
from sinfulness and
to choose right.

to be a center of
the reintegration
of children into
society through a
diverse program of
counseling, and teaching.



ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Tuloy is where attraction to power, popularity and people insistently beckon and I find myself renewing my vocation on a daily basis.

Tuloy is where I work closely with lay people as partners and I am continually intrigued by the different facets of God's mysterious call to every person.

Tuloy is where I come face to face with the insidiousness of evil and I can't help but be awed at the power and majesty of God in the simplest, most ordinary things.

Tuloy is where the non-material needs of the hundreds of children are as diverse as their ways of expressing it so



that I stopped practicing the preventive system; I live it.

Tuloy is where I am fascinated, awed, amazed, inspired and happier than I have ever been.

It is during the celebration of mass, with the sea of scarred beauty surrounding me that my vocations come together: Salesianity, Priesthood and Tuloy. I have come home.

Rocky Evangelista SDB

Human Rights and the Preventive System

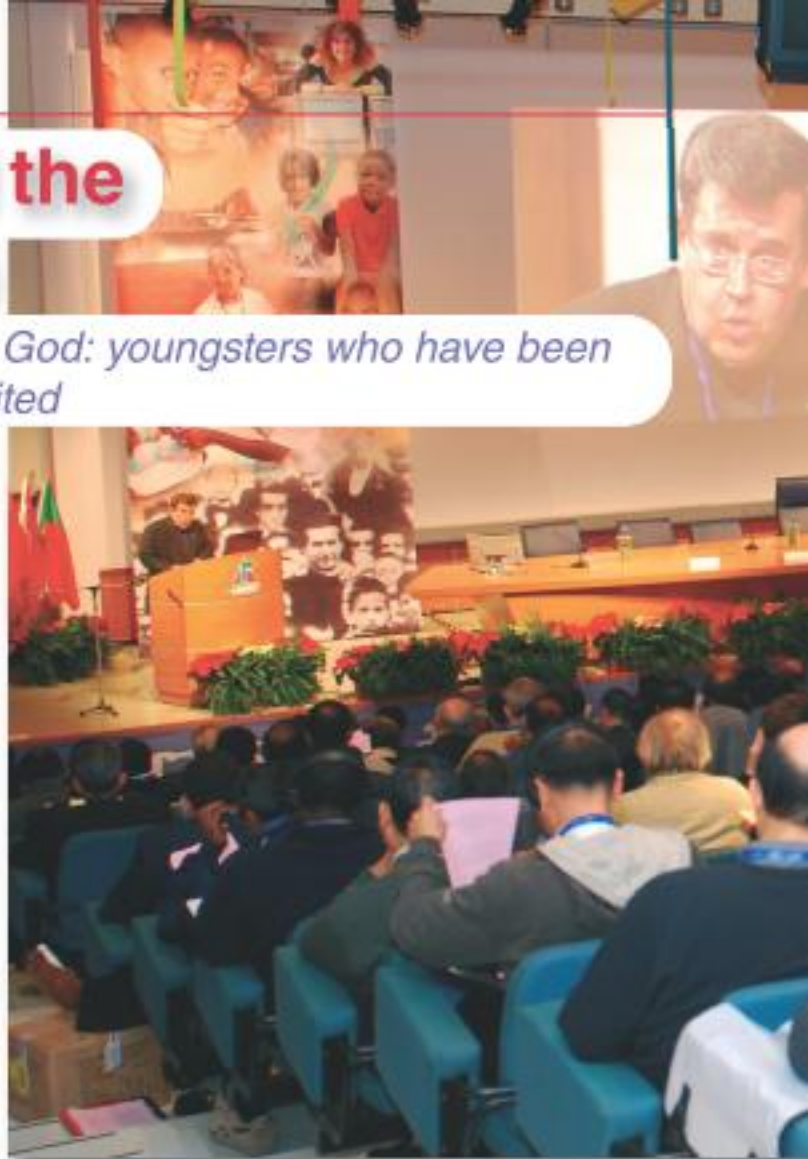
Giving dignity back to the children of God: youngsters who have been betrayed, ground into the dust, exploited

The International Congress: "Preventive System and Human Rights" took place in Rome from 2 - 6 January 2009 on a particularly significant occasion: the beginning of the Jubilee Year when the Salesian Family was celebrating the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Salesian Congregation. At world level there was also the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Paris, 10 December 1948) by the United Nations and at the beginning of 2009 the "International Year of Human Rights Learning" (UN General Assembly resolution 62/171. International Year of Human Rights Learning).

You have works, colleges, oratories for the young, but you have only one treasure: the pedagogy of Don Bosco.

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In seeking the significance of the connections between these events we recall the Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco offering the 2009 Strenna to the Salesian Family. Fr Pascual Chávez, 9th successor of Don Bosco, proposed that: "we educate with the heart of Don Bosco to develop the lives of young people to their full potential, especially the poorest and most disadvantaged, promoting their rights." At the beginning of his commentary on the Strenna Fr Chávez quotes Fr. Duvallet, who worked closely with Abbé Pierre in the apostolate of re-education of the young. His message was addressed to the Salesians: "You have works, colleges, oratories for the young, but you have only one treasure: the pedagogy of Don Bosco". In a world in which youngsters are betrayed, squeezed dry, crushed, exploited, the Lord has entrusted to you a pedagogy in which respect for the young person, for his greatness and his frailty, for his dignity as a son of God prevail. Preserve it, renew it, rejuvenate it, enrich it with all the latest discoveries, adapt it to these twentieth century creatures and their tragedies that Don Bosco could not know about. But for heaven's sake, preserve it! Change everything, if necessary lose all your houses but preserve this treasure, forming in thousands of hearts the way to love and to save the young, which is Don Bosco's heritage".



There is a proposal echoing through this appeal: a new understanding of the Preventive System, Don Bosco's educational heritage, under the banner of fostering human rights, especially those of juveniles. The International Congress "Preventive System and Human Rights" was something the Rector Major wanted and he entrusted its preparation and execution to the Youth Ministry Department along with VIS - *Volontariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo*.

The Preventive System is a sure approach to educating the young, overcoming all barriers, and it is offered as a platform for dialogue in a new culture of rights and solidarity.

The experience of so many Salesians from around the world confirms that the Preventive System is a sure approach to educating the young, overcoming all barriers, and it is offered as a platform for dialogue in a new cul-



ture of rights and solidarity. Promoting the rights of juveniles, fostering a culture of life and changing the structures that result in injustices, is part of what being an educator is all about and, as a consequence is at the heart of how the educator works. Seen this way education to human rights can be seen as education to honest, active and responsible citizenship, able to combine theory and practice, knowing and being; and is the kind of education which knows how to integrate the proposal of knowing with forming consciences. Education to human rights is education to critical capacity, and the courage to take a stance; to brave witness. It is an ongoing and daily kind of education. 300 people from 130 countries took part in the Congress, representing the 97 Salesian provinces. Speakers who offered their reflections included: The Salesian Rector Major Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, Fr Adrian Bregolin - Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr Fabio Attard - General Councillor for Youth Ministry, Fr Ferdinando Colombo SDB - vice president and CNOS delegate for VIS, Carola Carazzone - in charge of the human

rights desk, VIS, Vernor Munoz Villalobos - special reporter for the United Nations on the right to education, Giovanni Maria Flick - President of the Constitutional Court for the Italian Republic Antonio Papisca - who holds the UNESCO Chair for Human Rights, Director of the Interdepartmental Centre for research and services on the Rights of individuals and people at the University of Padua and Jean-Marie Petitclerc SDB - Director of the Le Valdocco Association, and Department head for the Ministry for the good functioning of cities, Paris.

Fabio Attard SDB

Don Bosco project in Bolivia

So children may recover their love for life

Amongst the various significant works of Don Bosco in Bolivia, various projects have come into being in Santa Cruz since 1988 giving attention to the needs of the young who have been affected by their parents' unemployment, or street life for lots of children, delinquent behaviour amongst gangs and a growing atmosphere of violence especially in main cities like La Paz, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz.

Thus the Don Bosco Project for children at risk came into being. One of the first stages is the "Mano Amiga" (a Friendly Hand) Home, where children are often brought by the police, or sent from religious or public institutions, or even brought along by people who keep an eye out for them on the streets or in other dangerous places. They are often brothers of those already at the centre and they are taken in to avoid yet another experience of family separation.

The "Techo Pinardi" (Pinardi Shed) Home takes in street children with no place to sleep, and who are very often mistreated by the police, or their neighbours since they live in such a miserable state. Many are affected by drugs or are escaping from gangs.

Those who wish to get out of their situation are transferred to "Patio Don Bosco" a day centre where the child chooses to leave the streets and is given specialist education, either in practical workshops or where he or she can go back to formal education in school, according to need.

The stay in these homes is always just for a time, until the emergency situation that brought the child to the Project has been overcome.

Another stage is for those most affected by sniffing drugs, or notably affected by their street circumstances, and is called "Granja Moglia" (Moglia Poultry Farm) Home. Through occupational therapy, looking after poultry, they can reconnect with their childhood and their almost wasted adolescence.



And those who are ready then go on to "Hogar Don Bosco" (Don Bosco Home), a home for orphaned children, or neglected or otherwise at risk, and who have already been through the earlier stages. The youngsters are brought to this Home to prepare them for life: formal schooling, workshops, living in community, sport, prayer, peace.

Once they turn 15 they can opt for a technical career and receive this kind of education at "Albergue Miguel Magone" (Michael Magone Hostel), for adolescents who seek this; then at "Barrio Juvenil" (Boys Town), for those over 18 who study and work but still need accompaniment. It is in these two Homes that they prepare for life. After these stages the young person is more prepared to re-enter society, work and look after himself, be responsible for his actions, and contribute to building a better world.





The stay in these homes is always just for a time, until the emergency situation that brought the child to the Project has been overcome. This is why there is need for an interdisciplinary team, social workers, psychologists, doctors and teachers, many from the oratories and youth centres, who assist us in our mission.

The final aim of these Salesian works is to bring in children who have lost their love for life, and it is about giving them security and freeing them from the dangers of the street, and finally, returning them to family or to a stable place where they can recover a sense of meaning in life.

Every day there is an effort to create a sense of acceptance and family life. In this kind of setting human and Christian values are encouraged so that the children can develop in a balanced and tranquil manner, recovering

from the traumas they have suffered and gaining a positive view both of themselves, their own self-esteem and their future.

**Don Bosco's heart hears the silent cries
of these children, adolescents,
young people on the street.**

Don Bosco's heart hears the silent cries of these children, adolescents, young people on the street who only want a chance in life, and his Sons in Bolivia are also hearing these cries, and look and love with the eyes and heart of Don Bosco to give them back their smile.

Ivan Mamami SDB

Young Spaniards celebrate Easter

One thousand eight hundred young people from all over Spain and from every Salesian Province celebrated Easter in 2009

The manner and style of celebrating Easter in youthful settings is rich and varied. In some Salesian provinces these celebrations bring adolescents and older youth together in various places and according to various age brackets. Other celebrations are local, tied to the Salesian community; others still are rural, in country parishes where the people have grown old or have lacked due pastoral attention. There are Easter celebrations which include some parts of the Santiago Pilgrim Trail. In this way hundreds of young people celebrate Easter each year, the Mystery of his death and resurrection, getting involved in bringing people together, preparing and then leading these encounters.

"We celebrated Jesus Passover and we discovered the power of his love, a love ready to give itself unto death", said Txetxu Villota at the conclusion of the Easter celebration in Somalo. He highlighted especially the "desert day" which they had on Holy Saturday: "This time alone offered us time to think, pray and start out from our experience with its questions, its routine and empty spaces... In the evening we came back home to Somalo, our Emmaus, and shared the day's reflections...". And he finished his testimony in these words: "From Somalo we would like to pass on the joy and courage needed so we can proclaim through our lives that Jesus is the only Lord and that he is salvation and meaning for our world and its history".

Really, Easter celebrations with the young are a profound religious and pastoral experience, very rich and fruitful.

As Miguel Ángel M. Nuño writes, referring to the Easter celebration in Antequera, "What we have experienced over these days wasn't simply a friendly setting or just the warmth of youthful empathy. It was above all the certainty that Jesus is alive and gives meaning to the lives of each one of these young people. These are young people who have discovered over these days that what gives value to our existence is not what I have but who I am"

Other than these youthful celebrations of Easter, there are some in the cities, the "Urban Easter" or "Open Easter", where Holy Week is celebrated in parish or educational settings, offering specific occasions for encounter, catechesis and personal and communal prayer for young people. As Fernando Miranda emphasised, "this is how we create links with Salesian ministry in



these celebrations with older leaders, families and young adults who have been educated by us and on whom we can count in the parishes and educative communities at this central moment of Christian living”.

And the Santiago Pilgrim Trail is not left out of these Easter celebrations either. 35 pilgrims from the Cisneros di Alcalá de Henares Youth centre did that, covering 115 kilometres over six days from Sarria to Santiago de Compostela. They got to Santiago on the Friday and in an improvised chapel in the hotel at “Monte del Gozo” they celebrated the Lord's Supper and the various Offices of the Triduum.

Really, Easter celebrations with the young are a profound religious and pastoral experience, very rich and fruitful. We can say without doubt, like Joan Marqués siad referring to Easter at Castelnou de Bages: “This Easter was not just being together; for us it was a constant living in (and with) God”.

Rodendo Soler SDB



CampoBosco, Salesian RAP. 'alla salesiana'!

'R' meaning reflection, 'A' meaning animation and 'P' meaning prayer... This is the CampoBosco programme. It is a powerful opportunity organised by the Salesian Family since 2005 and takes place in the last week of August at the Agricultural High school at Ressins (near Roanne). The first time they had 16 youngsters, the second 35, then 70 and last year around 100. For the 150th anniversary of the Congregation this year we are expecting 150 participants!

**'R' meaning reflection,
'A' meaning animation
and 'P' meaning prayer.**

Coming from the four corners of France, from Salesian Houses and elsewhere, the youngsters have four very full days. "I've come because I found the experience excellent last year", says Joackim. This year he is bringing a friend, Ghislain. Their main interest is sport. As for the spiritual bit... in small doses.

Each one comes with his or her own talents and it is a chance to share them in various workshops: music, singing, theatre, animations (cartoons), clowning, magic, video, dancing. Every year has a new theme. This year: "Once upon a time... I drew a sketch, now you put the colours to it".

Right from the start, Jean-Marie Petitclerc, the coordinator, highlights what this is all about. "Our task is to write CampoBosco's pages together. Each one can give of his best in the activities chosen. And each can take up activities that he or she does not normally do". The success of CampoBosco comes from everyone taking part in the activities on offer.

To lead young people to reflect on their lives, there are some testimonies from people in society and Church. Prayers and Mass are tied to the real lives of the young people and life at CampoBosco. The final day before leaving is prepared for on three occasions in three different places: In the activities hall, a chance to thank the



Lord for the experience of these days together, looking at photos and in friendship groups, recounting what has happened; followed by a time in the Residence hearing and sharing the Word; and then finally Mass in the chapel.

The youngsters get involved on their first night of arrival. The workshops give each group the chance to prepare something for the concluding festivities.

Some of the young people who have taken part in CampoBosco, have this to say : Jean-Benoit, 14 at his first CampoBosco: "I had some extraordinary times. I didn't find people left out or alone; we spent all our time together; what I liked most was the final festivities, the result of the three days of workshops". Sarah, 17 was there for her second time: "memories of the last time and strong feelings about it brought me back. I was able to see friends from last year and get to know new people. What I liked most was the friendships made, times of prayer, an excellent sports carnival and the leaders"





sense of humour". Rémi, 16 is from Paris. He already came last year. For him the reconciliation in the evening was a high point: "It was a powerful moment" he says. I liked Simon's testimony: he went on the Compostela pilgrimage, and I found it really interesting. We are the same age and I was able to discuss it with him. Then the hymns came from M.EJ to help us pray. After reconciliation I was in full form, ready to continue the night...".

**These times together are important
and the kids can talk about their
experiences during the day.
I try to give each one a chance to speak.**



After three years, young people from 18-25 can become leaders. They spend time together to work on the theme, meet up with people giving testimonies. They lead the games and all the festivities. They then work with the 13-18 year olds during all their time together. Grégoire is a student. Here is his testimony: "I like it a lot being in the midst of the kids taking part and getting them to take part. These times together are important and the kids can talk about their experiences during the day. I try to give each one a chance to speak. I also find the moments of prayer very moving; everyone takes this time seriously. There is a lot of respect shown for each other. I grew up with this experience, have been enriched by the gatherings and I think I'll be coming back next year!".

Vincent Grodziski SDB

50 years of the Don Bosco Youth Service in Belgium North Province

The Don Bosco Youth Service is the organisation which heads up all Salesian leisure time activities for young people in Flanders (Belgium North Province).

In order to meet the various needs and requests coming from summer oratories and many other youth activities the Don Bosco Youth Service offers various formation programmes. The formation programmes are based around four core topics: Formation of youth leaders; formation in the context of the international volunteer movement; search for meaning, or spirituality; support for other youth activities. Other than specialist courses, the formation programme includes, in particular, courses for various kinds of leadership: basic courses for youth leaders (boys and girls); courses for those who are senior leaders in charge; courses for those who instruct young leaders.

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The international volunteer work offers young people concrete opportunities for working in specific Salesian contexts, e.g. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Mexico (with Vides-Vlaanderen), Rwanda, as well as in various European countries (in cooperation with "Don Bosco Youth-Net").

Activities in the field of spirituality offer encounters based on lived Christian faith and a deeper understanding of faith.

And finally the Don Bosco Youth Service supports a range of activities for young people, e.g. Games camps, summer oratories. The service offers camps for specific groups of young people.

This year the Don Bosco Youth Service celebrates 50 years of existence: half a century during which enthusiastic groups of young people have been involved in the Service's activities. One needs to celebrate something of this kind. A working group has been set up to deal with the question: what is the best way to give thanks for and celebrate all these volunteers (lay men and women, FMA, SDB). And preference has been given to organising a day of gratitude and festivity.



The day was held on 25th April 2009. At the campus of the Don Bosco Institute in Haacht more than 700 (ex-)volunteers were made welcome. They all had good reasons for celebrating this half century of Don Bosco Youth Service.

This year the Don Bosco Youth Service celebrates 50 years of existence; half a century during which enthusiastic groups of young people have been involved in the Service's activities.

The day began with the Mass, celebrated by the Provincial, Fr Jos Claes, assisted by Fr Fabio Attard, General Councillor Youth Ministry, and Mark Tips (who is in charge of Don Bosco Youth Services). The FMA were represented by Sr Maria del Carmen Canales, also a General Councillor, and the local Provincial Sr Thérèse Angelet. A whole range of activities began after the



Mass, especially a number of study and work groups. There were also an exhibit and an academy showing the half century of Don Bosco Youth Service. The day concluded with a good supper followed by an evening of dancing. It was a wonderful feastday all put together, one much appreciated by those who took part.

Other than this solemn celebration on 25th April, it seems opportune to mention some other events celebrating the fiftieth. On Friday 15th May a delegation of our volunteers was received in the Lovanio Town Hall by the representative for youth and the president of youth services in the city.



On Friday 7th July Princess Astrid, accompanied by the Governor of Anversa Province and the Mayor of Kasterlee, visited an "adventure camp" organised by Don Bosco Youth Services". It was more than just

a fleeting visit. They spent a whole day, where Princess Astrid was not just a passive observer, but often got right into the act herself. The visit was also in connection with the 150th anniversary of the Salesian Congregation. The visit from such an exalted personage is something we regard as a great honour and is seen as confirmation of the very many excellent services for youth which our Congregation has provided, along with these very same young people.

57th Salesian Family Pilgrimage to Fatima

Every year since 1947 this pilgrimage has taken place and it is one of the largest annual pilgrimages to the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, with around 1,500 participants from the various Salesian Family groups and sympathisers of Don Bosco's work.

This "spiritual return to Mary's home" took place last year from 16-17 May. The pilgrimage is a chance for reinvigorating faith, meeting friends in the great Salesian Family and sharing moments of generosity and communion. That's how it was from the initial greeting to Our Lady, then the musical "¿Por qué me persigues?" (why are you persecuting me?) presented by the Salesian Youth Movement, to the candlelight procession - a weaving of inner silence, at the Vigil.

The experience offered three great formation opportunities for the Salesian Family in 2008-2009: the Salesian Family lives the Word with Mary, celebrates the 150 years since the founding of the Salesian Congregation and recalls Blessed Francisco Marto (from Fatima) in the centenary of his birth.

"Shine like the stars" was the theme for the Salesian Youth Movement National Day.

On this same occasion, the Salesian Youth Movement commemorated its National Day in Fatima with a gathering of all the young people from various pastoral settings run by the Salesians, Salesian Sisters, Salesian Family groups and the SYM itself. Around seven hundred young people from every House took part.

Under the slogan "Shine like the stars in the world", the day began with a walk around Fatima, which all groups took part in and which involved various moments of reflection and festivity.

The pilgrimage is a chance for reinvigorating faith, meeting friends in the great Salesian Family and sharing moments of generosity and communion.

As well as the "Arte y fe" (Art and Faith) festival which usually marks the Movement's National Day, given that this year had been selected by Pope Benedict XVI as the Year of St Paul, the SYM prepared a musical about the Apostle, "Why are you persecuting me?", led by Fr. Alfredo Juvandes and Deacon José Cordeiro; music by Fr. Alfredo Juvandes; stage setting by José Cordeiro and coreography by Nádia Jesus and Ana Barros. A group of young actors and actresses from the Salesian Work in Lisbon presented the musical. Some 2200 people watched the performance.



For the occasion the Salesian Family of Portugal had the Salesian Regional Councillor for Europe West, Fr José Miguel Nuñez Moreno present, and the Councillor for the Salesian Sisters, Sister Alaide Deretti, as well as the Provincial Fr João de Brito Carvalho and the FMA Provincial, Sr Maria da Conceição Santos, which made the Rector Major, Fr. Pascual Chávez' Strenna something real: "Make of the Salesian Family a vast movement of people for the salvation of the young".

The closing Mass of the pilgrimage was presided over by Salesian Bishop, the Auxiliary of Lisbon, Bishop Joaquim Mendes.

Raquel Fragata



ORGANIZAÇÃO: DELEGÇÃO NACIONAL
SALESIANA DE PASTORAL JUVENIL E EQUIPA
DE PASTORAL JUVENIL DAS FILHAS DE MARIA
AUXILIADORA
PARA MAIS INFORMAÇÕES CONSULTE O FOLHETO

DIA MJS 2009
16 E 17 DE MAIO | FÁTIMA

brilhai como
astros

Experience a home, parish, school for life, and playground

In addition to schools, parishes, and retreat centres, the Province of Saint Andrew also serves young people through the relatively non-structured environment of the Boys & Girls Club or youth centre. Boys & Girls Club of America is a national organisation that provides name recognition and resources for programming and training for some of our youth centres. We Salesians collaborate with this national organisation and are committed to providing evangelical and pastoral aspects in these centres. In this way we are able to attract and reach thousands of inner city young people who would not be able to attend our schools. In these centres they experience a home, a playground, a school for life, and a parish where they can meet God and learn to become honest citizens and good Christians.

We are able to attract and reach thousands of inner city young people who would not be able to attend our schools.

Fr. Oreste Trinchieri, first Provincial of the San Francisco Province, established Salesian Boys' Club in San Francisco in 1917. At the time, the North Beach district of San Francisco spawned 60% of the city's delinquency. He realised that the volatile, creative character of the boys that made up the area must have outlets for their energies. The Salesian Boys' Club was the answer. Connected to Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, first Salesian foundation in the United States, the Club today has grown tremendously and serves both boys and girls from all over the city. Membership hovers around the 1000 mark and promises to grow even larger.

The West Contra Costa Salesian Boys & Girls Club of Richmond was initially started by lay people in the 1920s as the San Pablo Boys Club.

In 1962 Brother Phil Mandile, SDB, was appointed as Program Director and the following year became the first Salesian Executive Director of the Club. The object of the work has always been young people in need. At first, just boys and then in the 1990s girls were allowed to become members. It then became the West Contra Costa Salesian Boys & Girls Club. Throughout the years guidance has been given to young people, giving them a safe place to learn about life and about themselves.

Our newest is the Salesian Boys and Girls Club of Los Angeles, founded in 1966 and dedicated that year by Cardinal Francis McIntyre, Archbishop of Los Angeles, and Salesian Cardinal Raul Silva. Housed in a former Jewish Menorah Centre the club has expanded to a second site at Salesian St. Mary's Parish. Together they open their doors to literally thousands of young people living in the poorest section of LA. In 1984 the Club received the coveted Excellence Award for Youth Services from the United Way of Greater Los Angeles.

Philip Mandile SDB





God's smile

Youth Festival for Salesian Youth Movement, Triveneto

The Youth festival for the Triveneto Salesian Youth Movement is open to all young people from Salesian or Salesian Sisters' centres, from the parishes and groups they belong to, or for any young people who have come into contact with Don Bosco's charism.

It is a chance to experience a feast day and to celebrate their own Faith.

Offering this Youth Festival every year means giving a strong public and community sign as Church expressing our desire to proclaim the love of the Risen Jesus and confirming our interest in and love for the young, and our commitment to walk with them. It is a special opportunity to broadly evangelise, where the chief protagonists are the young people themselves.

Musical theatre, the many stands, leadership, music, meeting exceptional people, opportunities for everyone for confession or adoration make this event, with its youthful creativity and freshness, a new "agora for evangelisation" in the world of the young. The Festival stands out, when compared to similar events, for the attention it pays to youthful involvement, a practical translation of the happy slogan "youth for youth". It is the young people themselves, in fact, who dream, create, put into practice, work, urged on by the great benefit they see which makes them say at the end: "It was worth it". "We needed this: occasions where everyone feels valued and can have something to strive and live for, opportunities to see the beauty of the Gospel and the Church and hand that on to other young people".

The Salesian Youth Movement offers its experience and energy for more than 5,500 young people. It is a mass gathering, for sure, but certainly not an anonymous one. For each one who can say: "I am here" we would also want them to say: "Here I found my desire for God and community confirmed". It won't be that for everyone, for sure, but we are pleased if each person can find his or her place in the Festival and go back home enriched.

Thanks to the Workshops, where the youngsters can put their skills at the service of the Festival, and through the fifty plus Stands where associations, oratories and youth groups make themselves known, the Youth Festival is offered, transformed and enriched again every year.

Each year has a theme which comes from the Rector Major's Strenna and is then developed by professional artists who meet to find original, poetic, and at the same time clear and youthful ways of communicating the Gospel, letting their inner selves be enthused and involved. This group is then broadened to include the young people who take part in the workshops and to the leaders who organise positive exchanges amongst young people and adults, ideas that can say a lot to society today.

One of the hinges upon which all this turns is the word 'creativity' resulting from solid effort, sleepless nights looking for solutions, but never worked out alone. There are tries and retries, constant readjustments. It is not creativity for creativity's sake, but it is that original way of arranging things like a mother does when she has to raise two children alone; or like a father does when he has to find new work when he turns 45 ... This is the kind of creativity we find in the Youth Festival. Perhaps this is what gains so much applause. And perhaps this is why the applause seems so extraordinarily appropriate. Perhaps this is why it seems to us that every effort to gain applause that Sunday becomes a school for learning how to gain applause in life. Because creativity is one of the ways God appears to us...

**You are not the hope of tomorrow but of today!
And... you are not just consumers;
you are involved!**

The 2009 event was especially significant because of the special presence of Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, 9th successor of Don Bosco and the Rector Major of the Salesians. Fr Chávez, who contributed to the morning show, started up a dialogue with the youngsters: "You are not the hope of tomorrow but of today! And... you are not just consumers; you are involved!". Interacting with them, the Rector Major gave them a message of hope which Don Bosco has handed on to them, by offering the person of Paul the Apostle, transformed by his encounter with Christ, and who became a witness to the Word of the Risen One. "Dear young people, look for



A new "agora for evangelisation"
in the world of the young.

Christ and encounter him and you will find meaning and happiness of life in Him".

The Youth Festival is not an isolated event but part of the annual programme offered to young people from the Triveneto, and this programme includes events which respond to the interests of the young and accompany them as they make important life choices. The SYM Triveneto website at www.donboscoland.it is the best tool for giving visibility and continuity to all the proposals and especially fosters encounters amongst the young who recognise themselves as being part of the same style of youthful holiness.

*Igino Biffi SDB
and Anna Peron FMA*







Missionary animation of Vietnam Province

Ten years after the first missionaries ad gentes were sent from Viet Nam, 1999-2009

Vietnam Province was given some 50 missionaries in its first 20 years from the time of foundation (1952-1975). After 1976 all missionaries had to leave the country. Once the difficult years had been overcome, beginning from the 90's initial formation stages were set up in the country. From 1999 a few confreres were sent out of the province for Practical Training or to study, while others went as missionaries *ad gentes* according to needs seen by the Rector Major.

In 2009 the Province celebrates this commissioning of missionaries *ad gentes* in a spirit of deep gratitude for this calling which is part of the Salesian vocation. In fact, gratitude for the gift of fifty missionaries received lies at the heart of the many missionary vocations. Amongst these fifty there were Fr. Mario Acquistapace and other confreres from the mother province (China), also including Servant of God, Fr. Andre Majcen (1905-1999) – a Slovenian missionary whose Cause for Beatification officially opened in December 2008.

The province is in fact experiencing the "Valdocco dynamic" of Don Bosco's own time. The more missionaries sent out to Latin America, the more young people there were who asked.

The results of extraordinary missionary generosity can be seen in a growing number of young confreres. The province is in fact experiencing the "Valdocco dynamic" of Don Bosco's own time. The more missionaries sent out to Latin America, the more young people there were who asked Don Bosco if they could join him as Salesians: The whole initial formation setting offers an original model of missionary formation, setting the hearts of young confreres on fire for mission *ad gentes*.

This year alone there are some 450 Aspirants at university level, all receiving formation in seven centres each week, around 40 prenovices, 36 novices and 56 post-

novices. This year too seven postnovices have generously offered themselves to the RM for mission *ad gentes*. These candidates to missionary life have had many assistants who are carrying out missionary work in Africa, Asia, Oceania or Europe.

The Provincial Delegate for mission animation is the Rector of the postnovitiate, where a lot of mission information and formation is on offer. In the third year of the postnovitiate there is a process of discernment offered with regard to the missionary vocation (which is now the core of a draft version of a discernment process circulating around the Congregation and which comes out of this experience). The Provincial newsletter features on a bi-monthly basis letters and news items from missionaries, coming in from 5 continents, and this is a form of literature at provincial level that enthuses and brings new missionary vocations, as was the case at the time of the magazine *Gioventù missionaria*, founded by Fr. Philip Rinaldi in 1923.

One of the key points is the SMD (Salesian Mission Day), an annual event which brings together around 500 members of the six Salesian Family Groups in the province, and which is animated by the SDBs in formation. As well as the formation part – conference, presentation of some missionary experiences through theatre, dance and singing – at the final Mass some of the confreres present their request to be a missionary *ad gentes* to the Rector Major. The SDB example is closely followed by the FMA and the first lay missionaries. Parents of missionaries are also part of this celebration, and they meet together to share the joys and sorrows of their children living in far off lands.

The Province has its own first evangelisation territory within its own borders (in the centre and north of the country, amongst indigenous tribes). Each year some confreres are sent on mission to these ethnic groups in the centre of the country. These are picked after making a request to be missionaries to the Provincial. Since the Year 2000 the Province has been entrusted with Mongolia, which now has three international communities –





a strategic choice made by the Province – to guarantee a more effective evangelisation.

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After the first ten years two confreres, for health reasons, have returned. One can encounter confreres sent by the

Rector Major in the following mission locations:
Oceania - Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands
Asia - Taiwan, South Korea, China - Hong Kong, Cambodia;
Africa - Chad, Sudan, South Africa, Zambia,
America - Peru
Europe - Hungary, Lithuania, Albania, Italy, France, Middle East

The Rebirth of the Salesian presence in Juba, South Sudan

Juba is one of the small cities in Sudan. It is the regional capital of Southern Sudan which has its own autonomous Government after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in the year 2005. Juba is also the capital of the Sudanese state of Central Equatoria which is a Bari-speaking State. According to the population census taken in 2005 the population of Juba was 163,442 but now it is estimated at approximately 300,000. It is also a growing and expensive city to live in. From an economic point of view we can unofficially say that JUBA is the second costliest city in the world after Tokyo in Japan.

At the beginning of every act of faith, there is often a seed of fear, for great acts of faith are seldom born out of calm calculation.

(72)

The Salesians of Don Bosco came to Sudan in 1979 after PROJECT AFRICA was initiated by the then Rector Major, Fr Egidio Viganò, the seventh successor of Don Bosco. The first presence was in Maridi in 1979. In 1982 the Salesians came to Juba to take care of the Printing press which was serving the Sudanese Catholic Bishops Conference. Along with the work in the Printing press the pioneering Salesians were also involved in pastoral and youth work. Even today there are people both in the lay and the priestly status who speak about the Salesians and their missionary spirit which brought life to this war-torn area. Due to the war and its impact foreign missionaries were expelled from Juba in 1992, so the Salesians had to leave and take up the spreading of the Salesian charism in Khartoum the capital of the Sudan.

After the signing of the Comprehensive Peace agreement in 2005, the Archbishop of Juba H.G. Paolino Lukudu Loro invited the Salesians back into his Archdiocese and offered them a Parish on the banks of the Nile. The parish land became part of an historical place, Gondokoro, where the Catholic faith was sown by the Comboni Missionaries in the South Sudan.

Salesians were entrusted with the newly evolved parish, Gumbo, which has St. Vincent De Paul as its Patron. The



territory is vast, but the people are scarce due to Rebel (LRA) attacks. Fr. Dominic Padinjaraparampil and Fr. Henry Woo reached this place on 13th November 2006. Later they were joined by Br. Sandeep Toppo Raju. At the beginning of every act of faith, there is often a seed of fear, for great acts of faith are seldom born out of calm calculation. Yes, the Salesians launched into the new beginning to bring prosperity to the troubled youth of this war-torn society. As Henry Ford says, "Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success". Now Fr. Padinjaraparampil and Fr. Paulraj Johnson having stayed with the people, are trying to bring about progress by initiating new developmental works along with the help of Fr. George Madathett.

Illiteracy, alcoholism, idleness are the trademarks of the people of the area. The war had its impact on the people by making them dependent. Child kidnapping is another dangerous phenomenon which causes instability to the people's way of life and to the Salesian mission. With all these challenges Salesians are now serving in five mission centres which have their own peculiar problems of insecurity, instability and infrastructural difficulty. It is



rather a new way of life. With the existing parish set up they are now initiating proper animation through faith formation and trying to give them a new life. They are at present trying to build the community hall and the Salesian residence.

One day the youth of South Sudan will harvest the benefit of the work and carry the spirit of Don Bosco to all remote corners.

As they build the concrete structures for existence, they are also trying to strengthen the people's existence through animation, cooperation, collaboration and participation. They have to leap forward with a big plan and developmental activities for the people of the south Sudan, planning for the overall development by way of building institutions for primary and secondary education, technical and agricultural training, teacher training and capacity building, health care unit and a youth centre. They are sowing the seeds for development in Don Bosco's way, so that one day the youth of South Sudan will harvest the benefit of the work and carry the spirit of Don Bosco to all remote corners.

The Salesians are dreaming like Don Bosco. With the Help of Mary Help of Christians they can inculturate the image of Don Bosco as a true Sudanese for the benefit of the Sudanese.

Johnson Paulraj SDB

Paraguay's Chaco Vicariate

Salesian Missions: for the dignity of the poorest

Paraguay's Chaco covers 300,000 km² to the east of the Paraguay river, and has an inhospitable climate and terrain. There are isolated indigenous and semi-indigenous groups in the Region speaking a variety of languages.

Since the 19th century the west coast has opened ports and tannin factories based on the livestock in the region. Evangelisation also began in that century: firstly an Anglican mission, then Catholic missionaries sent by Pope Leo XIII at the request of the diocese and the Paraguayan Government, concerned about the sorry state of the indigenous people. In 1894 Rome appointed Salesian Bishop Louis Lasagna to reconnoitre the Paraguayan area during his visit to the Mato Grosso and plan for the sending of missionaries.

The Salesians arrived in Paraguay and founded centres in Asunción and Concepción (1896). From there they took it on themselves to explore and send missionaries into the Chaco. In 1917 the Mission to the Chaco was officially erected with the Salesians in charge. A little later from Bolivia the Oblates of Mary Immaculate came to the south-east of Chaco, around the Rio Pilcomayo area.

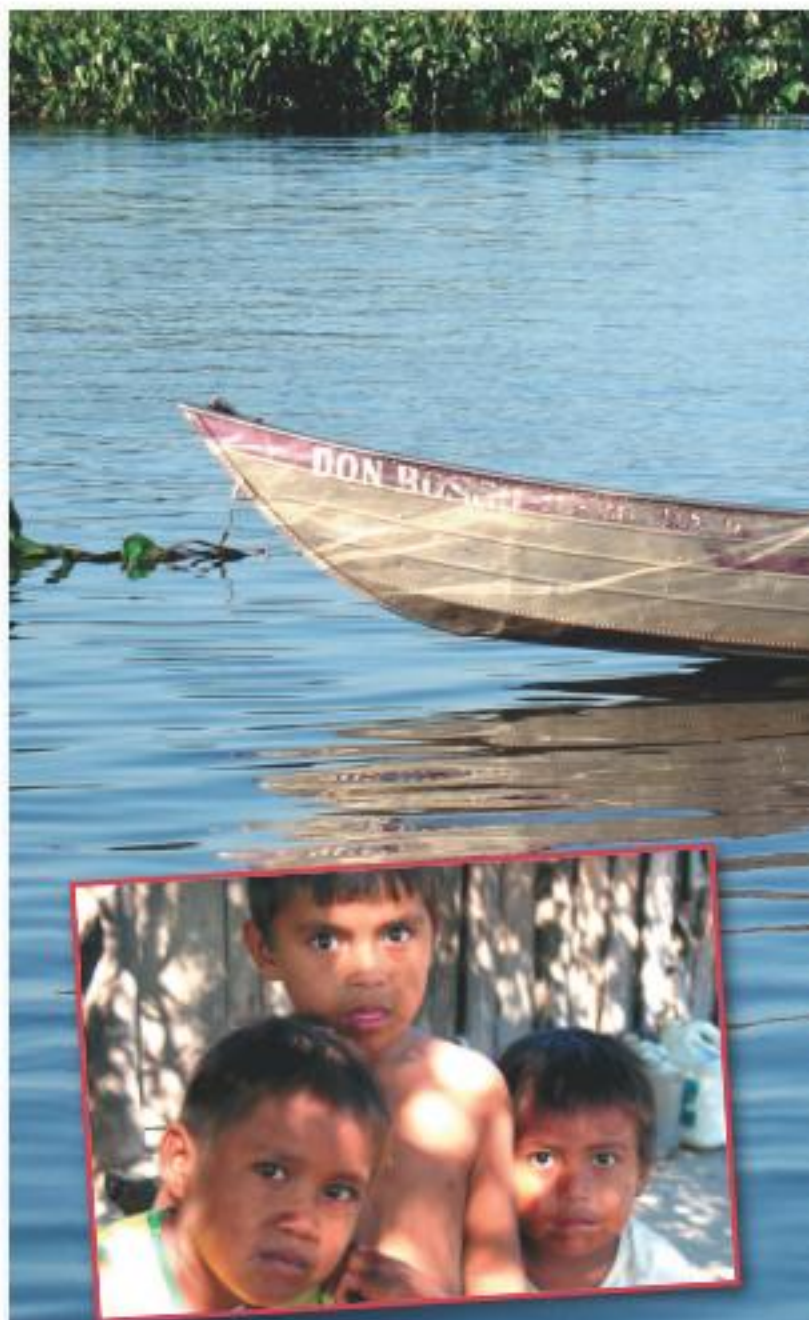
The mission work has been supported over a long period with few human and economic resources but with pastoral creativity and enthusiasm.

In 1920 the Salesian Congregation set up its missions along the north-east coastal area of Chaco. Fr. Emilio Sosa Gaona (later the first bishop of Concepción and Chaco) organised an exclusively indigenous population on the coast at Napague (1926-37), and other mission centres in various ports on the Chaco Riviera, tied in with the factories where most of the indigenous people worked. In 1926 the Salesian Sisters came.

In 1948, the Holy See created the Vicariate Apostolic of Chaco, giving it to the Salesians. Its first bishop was Uruguayan Salesian Ángel Muzzolón (1948-1968) who founded the parishes of Pinasco, Casado, Sastre, Guaraní and Fuerte Olimpo, where he himself was lo-

cated. There were indigenous groups belonging to various tribes. First historical contacts were made with the Ayoreo (1962) who lived in a very primitive state and they then began to receive attention in their own communal groupings. From 1969 until 1986, Bishop Alejo Ovelar was in charge, and he won over the indigenous people with his pastoral concern.

The Paraguayan Chaco has been undergoing a serious economic crisis and increasing population loss. The na-



tives have emigrated to other places in the country in search of subsistence and work. The region has also suffered major droughts and floods. Communications by land are at times impossible and the river offers the only transport but with long and difficult journeys. The mission work has been supported over a long period with few human and economic resources but with pastoral creativity and enthusiasm.

Bishop Zacarías Ortiz was the bishop from 1988 until 2004. With renewed pastoral zeal he helped education, catechesis, the importance of local languages to grow, visited the large farm holdings and undertook lengthy missionary journeys through the entire region. Twice a year he encouraged formation meetings for missionaries involving religious and lay people.

From 2006 Bishop Edmundo Valenzuela has continued this pastoral effort. New missionaries from other dioceses and religious congregations have been brought in, family catechesis has grown, and a network of community radios fulfils a necessary social function. Today, as an expression of the educative and pastoral mission, Salesian missionaries are much involved in the defence of the poorest especially by fighting for their dignity: land, work and cultural identity.

Walter Jara SDB



Kazincbarcika

Salesian mission and DB tech. school

In 2006 three Salesians started a new community in an already functioning school. The majority of the students are of Gypsy origin, very much condemned by the Hungarians and an object of prejudice. The first aim of the education we offer is not only to give them a diploma, but also to integrate them into society as honest citizens and good Christians, according to the original Salesian educational system. Most of the students (whether Hungarian or Gypsy) come from a very endangered background; if they have family at all they are poor, seen as criminals and mostly without any life perspective. They are poor economically, socially, emotionally and spiritually, so the majority of our youngsters come to us as their last hope of finding a place of acceptance. From every other school they are sent away.

Our school started as an apprentice school, and since 1989 it has borne the name of Don Bosco. The Salesians have maintained it since 1993. The buildings stood separately at the edge of the town in a neglected, poor area. In 2004 we were given an empty primary school building, in the centre of the city, next to a Gypsy 'ghetto'. Since then we have a secondary school day and evening department, as well the primary 7th and 8th grades, with the technical school's 9th and 10th grades. In October 2008 a new building was inaugurated to include appropriate workshops for seven different trades, plus the new Salesian community. The first Salesians were Fr. Simon as director from India, Br. Geza from Hungary, and Cleric Dominic Savio from Vietnam.

The first aim of the education we offer is not only to give them a diploma, but also to integrate them into society as honest citizens and good Christians. The mission work has been supported over a long period with few human and economic resources but with pastoral creativity and enthusiasm.

Prejudice towards the Don Bosco students is changing in the eyes of the city dwellers. This is the reason why we have been able to engage in successful negotiations with the municipality about the buildings to ensure the future of the school.



The school is run with the support of the State and the Church. The conditions for teaching and training are provided. We would like to develop the technical formation of our seven trades to broaden the enterprise, making possible:

- teaching by producing that is closer to real life,
- rationalizing the running costs.

Goals: Realisation of a classic Salesian institute. Quality development of the Oratory (religion, free-time). Stronger evangelisation (religious life: theoretical and practical).

Geza Nadudvari SDB



Trzciniec

A home for young people who love life

The Salesian Education Centre, commonly known as the Don Bosco Youth Home, is a Social Welfare and Education Centre. Lying somewhere between a Family Home and a re-education centre for young people who have social problems, it was founded by someone passionately in love with Don Bosco and his preventive system - Mrs Zofia Lewandowska.

Speaking of difficult beginnings she tells us: "The house was always open for anyone seeking refuge, warmth, love and meaning in life. The house became a meeting place for different groups of similar age with their intimate world of little dreams. They were able to develop their ideas in an atmosphere of freedom and security. Things didn't always go well, smoothly. Some were rebellious with a difficult history and habits that were difficult to tolerate. On one occasion we organised a 'heavy metal' music group. They smoked, their language was foul, and the only way they opened doors was by kicking them open. The proposal to cooperate was a simple one: They could offer us their 'heavy metal,' and we would give them 15 minutes of God. A quarter of an hour often became two hours. The youngsters would often spontaneously invite a priest to discuss things with him. As the months went on the house became too small. Lots of young people became full-timers at the house. This is when the idea came to invite the Salesians of Don Bosco to carry on the adventure involving these unfortunate young people, looking for meaning and happiness".

**They smoked, their language was foul,
and the only way they opened doors
was by kicking them open.**

And it is a story that the Salesians from Pila Province, in northern Poland, have continued until today. Since 1992 under the guidance of the Salesians the Centre has become a home, school, parish and playground for hundreds of young people lost along the way as they look for freedom.

After the reform of public education and schooling in Poland in 1999, the Salesians in Trzciniec founded a secondary school with technical education as the main of-

fering in view of future work prospects. Everyone learns carpentry, for example. In 2005, for the 25th anniversary of the Province, as a sign of recognition Salesian communities in the Province refurbished much of the house at Trzciniec, since most of the original buildings were old military huts from the military airport. Salesians today are networking as part of a national system of the Juvenile Courts.

The Youth Home has become a Youth Education Centre, following the norms of the Polish State. As a result the Centre receives State subsidies, and the Salesians offer



their charisma. The Centre has become a typical place for re-socialising young people from 13 to 18 years of age. The Youth Home atmosphere remains though – a centre esteemed and recognised for its quality throughout Poland: assistance, free time, hobbies, interest groups, outings and games, sport – but discipline too and a responsible approach to cooperating in one's project of life. For Trzcinec this is all an investment in community and pastoral education. In 2002, the Salesians and the educative community at Trzcinec were awarded with the "Family of 2002" prize, recognising their educational and social activity.

This is how Don Bosco's dreams have been achieved. Where there was a military camp after the war, defending the Communist Party's programme to educate young people without God – the Salesians are now giving wit-

ness to the fact that Don Bosco was always right: education terrifies a world without God.

In 2002, the Salesians and the educative community at Trzcinec were awarded with the "Family of 2002" prize.

And those who have been unfortunate in choosing the wrong paths in life, like these young people, can now feel that Don Bosco loves them and they can play their part in a society that once rejected them.

Antoni Balcerzak SDB



New Salesian Presence in Bangladesh

At the conclusion of the 26th General Chapter of the Salesians of Don Bosco the Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez announced that as a concrete expression of the commitment of the congregation to open new frontiers, the Salesians would go to work in Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries in the world. One year later this promise has become reality. The Salesians have been in Bangladesh just since 24 March 2009 and are already in the act of establishing their first presence in this country.

From 1928 the Salesians were working in the districts of Jessore and Khulna, then part of the diocese of Krishnagar. After the partition of India and the creation of East Pakistan in 1947, they continued to work in these places till 1952. Then they withdrew to the Indian part of Bengal, entrusting the pastoral work to the care of the missionaries of St Francis Xavier (the Xavarians).

(80) In 1971 East Pakistan became an independent country and was renamed "Bangladesh". The opening of the first Salesian presence in this country is at the same time an answer to the repeated requests of the Bishops for the presence of the Salesians as well as the launching of a new apostolic frontier on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Salesian Society which occurs on 18 December 2009.

The challenges that this new mission presents are indeed many. In summary, they are the challenges of evangelisation in the modern context and more specifically in a strongly Muslim environment. Precisely because of this Bangladesh becomes a new frontier for the Salesians.

As far as religion is concerned, 87% of the population of this country is Muslim. Among them there is no lack of extremists who are keen on introducing Sharia law throughout the country. The Hindus are some 10%. The remaining 3% include the Christians who hardly reach 0.35% of the total. The Catholics are barely 300,000 in a population of 150 million.

In such a context evangelisation requires a serious commitment to inter-religious dialogue as well as attention to

the renewed evangelisation of those already baptised because the Christian life of the faithful is in need of a great leap in quality.

From the social point of view, 97% of the population is Bengali. The rest are composed of different ethnic minorities and indigenous tribes which can be found also in India. These tribes are being increasingly marginalised and in a certain sense much exploited by the majority population. They do not have the same opportunities for development and self affirmation like the others.

The Salesians have been in Bangladesh just since 24 March 2009 and are already in the act of establishing their first presence in the country.

The phenomenon of poverty and misery is a stark reality for the vast majority of the population of Bangladesh. Official statistics notwithstanding, the daily earning of a good percentage of people is between 1.5 and 3 Euro. Periodic natural calamities compound the problems of misery. The absence of economic reserves makes the people incapable of repairing the losses caused by these disasters.

Illiteracy and inaccessibility to a good education complete the precarious social condition of the majority of the population in this country, and in particular of the economic minorities.

In this situation the Salesians have much to offer precisely because evangelisation and education are the two interconnected poles of the Salesian charism. We have come to this country to offer the young people and the poor in general the hope of a better tomorrow that is more human according to the Christian vision of life.

The first Salesian presence is at Utrail in the diocese of Mymensingh. It is situated in the Netrokona civil district, 55 KM to the north of the city of Mymensingh. Netrokona is one of the more underdeveloped districts in





Bangladesh. Because of the lack of some bridges which were washed away over the years in successive floods, the journey between Mymensingh and Utrail is a true adventure of patience and hardships lasting several hours.

At present the principal beneficiaries of the Salesian mission are the ethnic group called Mandi (Garo) and the poor children and youth of all the groups in the region. In a few months' time a new parish among the Mandi will be entrusted to us. We are now engaged in pastoral work with the accent on new evangelisation and the social "empowerment" of the faithful.

In such a context evangelisation requires a serious commitment to inter-religious dialogue as well as attention to the renewed evangelisation of those already baptised.

The diocese has handed over to us a free primary school in the name of St Francis Xavier. 270 poor children from Christian, Hindu and Muslim families attend this school. Every effort is being made to upgrade the standard of this school. The very first requirement for this is a proper school building. Through various educational initiatives for the poor children and the youth we have the plan to improve the overall social standing of the minorities and of the poor, in order to bring them on a par with the others. For this purpose we are still in search of a large piece of land. This is indeed a very ambitious dream, but for the sons of a great dreamer, with the help of God and the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, this dream will become reality day by day.

*Fr Francis Alencherry SDB,
Utrail, Bangladesh*

The father of the Achuar

Fr Luis Bolla: more than 50 years in the service of the indigenous Amazonians.

Being a missionary means more than great effort; it requires fidelity to a vocation of service, being able to put everything else aside to help one's neighbour and evangelise far-off places. Fr Luis Bolla is one of those, a truly great human being. He brings the Salesian charism in an indigenous style to the vast Amazonian jungle. His life is an example. His work immortalises him. At 76 years of age most of us would want to have his energy, youthful spirit and passion for life.

It was 1944, the Second World War still going on but young Luis Bolla was already clear about something at 12 years of age: he wanted to help people. A divine call was the moving force: "You will be a missionary in the forests: to bring my Word to aboriginal people and you will spend much time walking". He never imagined that morning that his life's direction would be decided.

Father Luis Bolla nostalgically recalls the moment when he left the port of Venice, Italy, destined for South America, in 1953. He was just 21 and it would be the beginning of a long mission journey to the new continent. "The moment I embarked was tough because I felt I had died". He left everything. At that time, one had to be ready never to return to see one's parents, friends, companions, mountains, people. "That was when I said to the Lord: I am putting everything in your hands. Only with you there is life. I died in order to rise again", recalls Father Bolla.

God never abandoned him and made him the key player in an impressive work with the Amazonian communities in Ecuador and Peru. He tells his story.

More than half a century of these accomplishments has passed and Father Bolla has made history in the indigenous Amazonian world. He began his work with the Shuar community in Ecuador, whom he had heard of as a seminarian. In 1959 he was ordained a Salesian priest. "I began work practically alone, without anybody's help, visiting them and being with them. It was a fairly difficult area and I was isolated, with only God's help".

Working amongst the people he learnt the language, and saw all the work that he would have to do in the coming years.



**That was when I said to the Lord:
I am putting everything in your hands.
Only with you there is life.
I died in order to rise again.**

On an unexpected journey to the east of Ecuador he first came into contact with the Achuar community, an in-





indigenous people with a warlike tradition living in the Córdoor mountains on the border between Ecuador and Peru. These people lived in harmony with nature and had accumulated a valuable ancestral knowledge of the Amazonian forests.

In 1971 Fr Bolla, enthused about the culture he had come across, was sent on a mission to the Achuar on the Ecuadorian side of the border. At the time they were an almost entirely unknown tribal people. The beginnings

were tough. He arrived at a time of tribal warfare. They wanted to kill him. "All the tribes were in a state of war and they threatened me with their weapons; there was a lot of tension. There were practically no communications between tribes, everything was blocked" Bolla said.

This did not discourage the missionary who was able to get to know and understand the people and live with them for many years, sowing the seeds of evangelisation.

The Achuar area in Ecuador is huge, but Fr Bolla's goal was to take up the evangelisation of the Peruvian area, which is even larger and includes 2/3 of the Achuar population. In 1984 he received authorisation from his superiors to work with the Achuar in Peru..

"There was no Christian tradition. And mission work was much more difficult because the Peruvian area was larger and more isolated, and there were big distances between one group and another, so it took several days either on foot or by canoe. It was all a challenge", the Salesian says.

Father Bolla carried out his work in a respectful way, in the Achuar style, taking into account the relationship these people held with the gods, their community and culture, their historical experience and he evangelised them without forcing them into conversion.

"I tried to work in the style of these people, their clothing, traditions, food, drink, housing respecting their style to get them to understand that I fully appreciated their culture. And I helped them to take their future into their own hands, in a human way, in organisation and in the religious area as a missionary, a long journey that was crowned last year with 5 deacons ordained by the Bishop of Yurimaguas"

Father Bolla carried out his great work with the Achuar overcoming difficulties, accusations including death threats from drug traffickers, timber merchants or the military, with the one and only motivation of building up Achuar communities and helping them to preserve their culture and thousands of years of tradition, making this people known and appreciated in the western world.

Along with fostering the Christian Faith, one of the most important tasks Fr Bolla has taken on is to translate the Achuar language into Spanish, a work of years of study and collecting oral testimonies, which he has brought together in the publication of a series of books *Mundo Achuar (The Achuar World)* which translates the history, traditions, customs, language, myths, songs and the very nature of these people. He has also written catechetical texts. Most recently he completed the New Testament. It becomes a legacy for the Achuar culture which only had oral forms to hand on its past to future generations. As the author puts it "A people without a history is not a people, so it becomes most important to write things down so that their history supports them, supports their aboriginal culture".

The missionary is recognised by the many Amazonian communities who know of the help that this priest brings to their communities.

Whatever we know about the Achuar people today we owe mostly to the work of this Salesian who with that mystique of Don Bosco knew how to become one with the inhospitable jungle to save souls and form Christians. The distress he experienced leaving his beloved Italy 50 years ago has been more than recompensed. It was worth dying to rise again.

Walter Fajardo



Glad tidings for AGL vice province

On Saturday 10 January 2009, around 200 members of the Salesian Family of the Vice Province of Saint Charles Lwanga in Africa Great Lakes (AGL) were at the community in Kimihurura (Kigali) to take part in the ceremony of the laying the foundation stone for the Provincial house.

Fr Oriando dalle Pezze, former missionary in Rwanda, and currently assisting the Economer General, was the Rector Major's delegate for this memorable ceremony in our vice province.

The delegation was erected in 1977, but on 15 August 2006 we were officially created a Vice Province through Fr Alericherry, who at this time, was the General Councillor for the Missions and then became Coordinator for the Africa Madagascar Region. Delegated by the Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chavez, to preside on that occasion, Fr Alericherry installed the first Superior of the Vice Province, Fr Gabriel Ngendakuriyo. It was during the Eucharist that this first Superior solemnly received the power to direct this new Salesian entity made up of three countries: Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda. All the events of the day were carried out in a climate of much joy at the work in Kimihurura, to the great pleasure of all the participants.

Around 200 members of the Salesian Family of the Vice Province of Saint Charles Lwanga in Africa Great Lakes (AGL) were at the community in Kimihurura (Kigali).

Before becoming a Vice Province with Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda belonged the Africa Central Province (AFC). Currently this latter now comprises the Democratic Republic of Congo. Uganda belonged to the East Africa Province (AFE).

After 2006 and until now, the Provincial, his Secretary and the Provincial Economer have been living with the community at Kimihurura for lack of an official residence. And this is why the laying of the foundation stone was such an important event for the whole Salesian Family. Progress in construction of the Provincial House is assured thanks to financial assistance from the Rector Major and a number of benefactors. To all of these we say "Many thanks".



Stretching yourself into the Neighbourhood

Bosco Mangaal (Light of Don Bosco), Manipur, India

Do you want an example of how you can educate thousands of children, and do a host of other promotional activities without running schools or institutions of your own? Welcome to Bosco Mangaal (Light of Don Bosco), the non-formal outreach programme of Don Bosco in Imphal, the capital of Manipur State in the northeast of India.

Some 870 children sing along and sway to the songs of Sadananda, the most famous singer and actor of Manipur as he performs in Savio Hall of Don Bosco, Imphal. A crowd of children is a common sight in any Salesian institution, but these children are special because they do not study in an institution, but in the homes of their 'teachers'. They had never been to school till Bosco Mangaal introduced them to the joys of learning through a chain of 'Don Bosco Literacy Centres' scattered over a wide area around the Salesian institution. There are about 2,000 children in these centres. The programme aims to motivate and prepare illiterate children and school dropouts to enter the regular school. Their mothers are organised into Self-Help-Groups so that they can improve their income and support the education of their own children.

They had never been to school till Bosco Mangaal introduced them to the joys of learning through a chain of 'Don Bosco Literacy Centres' scattered over a wide area around the Salesian institution.

Don Bosco, Imphal, runs three regular high schools, catering to over 3000 children, but reaches out to thousands of others through Bosco Mangaal. Two well-trained animators help improve 11 other schools scattered over the whole of Manipur. They give formal training to the primary level teachers in these schools and visit each school every month to follow up closely the teachers they have trained. They also hold programmes in these schools for the teachers of the higher classes, the senior students, the management and the



parents of the children. Once a year even the heads of these institutions come together for a three-day programme of sharing and learning. The thousands of children in these schools run by others benefit from the charisma of Don Bosco. This is Don Bosco's contribution to all the schools in the district.

Over 700 children have their education sponsored by Bosco Mangaal in a unique partnership among the school management, the parents and the Salesians, each of whom contribute one-third of the costs of the education. Follow-up by our staff ensures that the children not only receive an education of acceptable quality in whichever school they study, but also pick up human and Christian values promoted by the Salesians. Free counselling is provided in 23 neighbourhood schools by trained staff. This is Don Bosco's preventive system at its best.

846 children, infected or affected by HIV/AIDS, are sponsored even more generously by Bosco Mangaal. Be-





sides education, they receive counselling, improved nourishment and life-skills to cope with a serious problem that has befallen them through no mistake of theirs. 45 such children are given total care in collaboration with a congregation of nuns. A short-term but intensive training is given to 20 young AIDS widows at a time to empower them with skills for earning an income to support themselves and their children.

Bridge courses going on in four different places, interestingly named 'Leapfrog Courses', serve 160 pre-adolescent children in every batch, who have never been to school. They go through a year of intensive study and join the 4th or 5th grade in the following year.

What about the young above 14 who never saw the inside of a classroom? 18 centres provide them with basic education, skills in income generation, and skills enabling them to participate in and give leadership to the village council.

Other programmes that reach out to young people beyond the formal institution include:

1. Two youth centres, one at the centre and the other elsewhere in the town, run in collaboration with a local club;
2. A month long residential, intensive coaching for weak students in seven schools to ensure that they do not fail in the public examinations;
3. Forty five days of coaching for students of any school who fail these examinations before they reappear for the same examinations;
4. Training of graduates and post-graduates for a month to improve their skills in facing job interviews;
5. A special programme twice a year for mentally and/or physically challenged children of the town.

So now you know what you can do without formal institutions, but with love in your heart and imagination in your mind, fired by the passion of Don Bosco for the young!

María Arokiam Kanaga SDB

People's Action for Rural Awakening

Social Ministry of Salesians, Ravulapalam, India

People's Action for Rural Awakening (PARA) is the Social Action Initiative of Don Bosco Mission, Ravulapalem, Andhra Pradesh State, India. PARA came into existence as a response of Don Bosco Welfare Centre (DBWC) to the devastation caused by the 1986 Godavari river floods. When the immediacy of relief work was over DBWC was rechristened as PARA and was registered as an independent society. One and half years into rehabilitation work, by which time PARA had helped to reconstruct around 200 houses, PARA decided to enlarge its focus and since then it has been directing its resources, both human and material, towards social justice issues.

Networking with like-minded NGOs PARA played a key role in the emergence of *Andhra Pradesh Vyavasaya Cooleela Samakya* (a trade union of agricultural labourers) and the DAPPU collective - a collective of Dalit Community Based Organizations and Resource Organizations for rights assertion. The word 'dalit' (literally, 'oppressed') stands for the lowest strata of the society in the obnoxious caste system of India.

The word 'dalit' (literally, 'oppressed') stands for the lowest strata of the society in the obnoxious caste system of India.

The main areas of work have been:

1. Implementation of Minimum Wages Act (Central Government Legislation).
2. Appropriation of government waste lands to the poor especially to Dalits.
3. Prevention and redressing atrocities on Dalits especially women and children
4. Emancipation of women and raising their capacity to save and access credit and develop as entrepreneurs.
5. Eradication and rehabilitation of child labour

Since 2004 as part of the UN World Programme of Human Rights Education PARA has been spearheading Human Rights Education in the schools of Andhra Pradesh.



The past years of work initiated by PARA has received tremendous response from the people as well as the general public of the area. Considerable changes have been brought about in the living standards of the people of the service domain. The large scale adherence of people to the movement for Dalit empowerment launched by PARA, people's spontaneous sensitivity to the emerging issues, their inherent capacity to address independently the critical problems that they confront in day-to-day life, transformation of their attitude towards self and others, gaining acceptance as fellow citizens with dignity, fairness, equality and equity in social process corroborate the assertions made earlier.

Today PARA has carved for itself a special niche in the area of rights assertion and particularly in the area of redressing human rights violations of the marginalized especially the Dalits. The number of cases that PARA's





legal cell is called upon to respond to is a sign of its emerging relevance in the field of human rights protection and promotion.

What inspires PARA in this endeavor is the thought that all human beings belong to the one and only family of God without discriminations of caste, creed, race or color.

The past 20 years of work has seen over 4000 acres of land being restored to the poor, wages rising on account of struggles by agricultural labourers, over a hundred cases booked against those who committed atrocities against the Dalits – several of them leading to convictions, around 750 child labourers and school drop-outs

mainstreamed into schools, setting up of three mutually aided women's cooperatives with a total membership of 4580, over 250 differently-abled accessing education, health and self employment and around 4500 students in 120 schools in the human rights education programme. Responding to floods, cyclone and Tsunami PARA has also been instrumental in constructing nearly 1600 houses for those affected by natural calamities.

What inspires PARA in this endeavor is the thought that all human beings belong to the one and only family of God without discrimination of caste, creed, race or color. Therefore all of us are brothers and sisters, privileged to carry one another's burden and safeguard each other's dignity and security.

Thomas Pallithanam SDB

Touba: where grains of wheat are tossed on the ground

"In truth, in truth I say to you: unless the grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain. But if it dies, it yields a rich harvest"
Jn 12: 24.

This verse from St John's Gospel has become a reality in Touba. Fr. Valentin de Pablo, the former Regional for Africa and Madagascar, may he rest in peace, departed from this life here and his life is the seed that is making this little village to the south west of Mali known to the Salesian world. The last visit to Touba by Fr. Valentino de Pablo's successor, Fr. Guillermo Basañez, reminded us of the emotion with which the Salesians and the Christian community in Touba felt at Valentin's sudden passing.

The visit of the Regional, Fr Guillermo was unforgettable for us. It was Saturday 28th October 2009. All the village awaited his arrival, on the road from Bourelo. Finally towards 3 pm, two vehicles were seen. There was the driver and two people accompanying. Fr Georges Koevi from Touba and Brother Justin Ajavon from Sikasso.

Excitement ran high as he got out of the car. The Touba dancers were ready with their usual rhythms. He was welcomed by the important people from the village and drank the delicious honeyed water offered by a young girl. He liked it so much that he asked for a second. Then he was led to the foot of the tree from abroad. And it was there that several speeches were given: a speech from the Christian chief, the usual leader, and then the Rector of the Salesian community, Fr Grégoire Keita. The Salesian Sisters were also at the gathering.

We have welcomed the Rector Major to Touba in the person of the Regional.

The speeches were then followed by the presentation from the Touba dancers. He was offered a sheep. Then Fr Guillermo finally spoke a word of thanks for the memory of Fr Valentin de Pablo who died in Touba during the Extraordinary Visitation. He officially handed over the



missionary cross belonging to Fr. Valentin to the community, during the Sunday Mass in front of all the parishioners. Now the missionary cross of Fr. V. de Pablo can be found in the Salesian Community Chapel in Touba where anyone can come to pray quietly. The Regional left Touba, heading for Bobo-Dioulasso with his sheep and five chickens for a feast with the pre-novices and the Salesian community there.

From now on the Word of God from Matthew's Gospel *"and you Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are by no*





means least among the leaders of Judah, for out of you will come a leader who will shepherd my People Israel". (Mt 2:6) is a verse that the inhabitants of Touba will consider to be real. After years of hesitation, equivocation, decision and counter decision, today everyone looks to Touba where the seed that was Valentin has sprouted hope for all the village.

The work in Touba has changed its outlook with the beginning of the building of the new school for first and second year classes. A little more hesitation; everybody

is at work, Touba will show the world that it is not the least of the communities in the Province or in the Congregation, but one of the communities on which they can rely to truly carry out the mission for the young and the underprivileged.

Ferdinand Zigui SDB

Salesian Mission Centre in Warsaw

The Salesian Mission Centre in Warsaw is also the National Mission Office. It was opened in 1981 with a view to Project Africa and the first Polish Salesians to go to Zambia left from there. Initially it was based in Łódź then in Warsaw.

Fr. Bronisław Kant was the first Centre Director. It was a position he held for 19 years. The second Director was Fr. Stanisław Rafałko (2000-2009) and the third is Fr. Roman Wortolec. The recent changeover of Directors took place on 1st August 2009 during the annual meeting of Salesian missionaries and benefactors, an event that has now been running for seven years.

I believe this situation is unique in the Salesian Family where Salesians, Sisters, Lay people are working together like this for Don Bosco's great passion - the missions *ad gentes*.

(92)

During the difficult days of Communism Fr Kant organised and developed the Centre. He worked hard and enthusiastically to overcome all difficulties. He focused his efforts on helping missionaries in Zambia, but not only there. He set out to publish a monthly magazine *Salesian Missions*, set up the missionary museum, and published books and other materials on the missions. Over his 19 years there, 120 Salesians departed for the missions.

During the mandate of Fr Stanisław Rafałko the Centre took on a lot of energy. The enthusiasm of the new Director gave rise to new ways of working with the missions. He included lay people in the work for the missions - In April 2001 Fr. Rafałko set up a program for Distance adoption. It began with a focus on individuals, and after two years on groups. Thanks to this programme more than 10 thousand young people from 42 SDB and FMA communities in 19 countries were given a chance to study. In March 2002, again through the initiative of the Director the Don Bosco International Volunteer Movement was created, which enabled 60 young Poles to spend at least a year working for the missions and several hundreds spent time working in the missions during the holiday period. One of the principal objectives



of the Centre continued to be missionary animation and seeking material help for the missions. The mission magazine *Salesian Missions* continues to be an important tool in this animation; it has a print run currently of 28,500 copies and has become the most significant mission magazine in Poland. The Centre is also developing its missionary museum and has carried on a broad editorial and cinematographic enterprise within *Multimedia Don Bosco*. Over recent years 27 mission-focused films have been produced. Meanwhile the Mission Office has entered into collaboration with the *Media Centre Missioni Don Bosco* in Turin and also with national communications media: Television, Radio, Press. For some years now and working in with other Mission offices, the Centre has been financing mission projects belonging to the Salesians, Salesian Sisters and others. Over the last 8 years 196 projects have been completed. In 2007, the Centre began collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs thus gaining much recognition and getting the green light to involve funds destined for developing countries.



The Salesian Mission Centre in Warsaw exemplifies excellent cooperation amongst Salesian Family groups on behalf of the missions, a factor highlighted by the General Councillor for the Missions Fr. Vaclav Klement when he visited the Office on 24 November 2008: "I believe this situation is unique in the Salesian Family where Salesians, Sisters, Lay people are working together like this for Don Bosco's great passion - the missions *ad gentes*". The effect of this cooperation is quite visible. In 2000 there were 2,500 benefactors, while today there are more than 30 thousand.



Apart from mission activities, the Centre is also a 'home' for missionaries, both male and female who are on holidays in the country. They can always take a break at the Centre, see to medical arrangements or make their annual retreat. This remains an important function of the House.

The new goals which Church, Salesian Family and mission countries need to confront make it possible to create new ideas in the field to help mission *ad gentes*. We seek the creativity and good ideas of anyone who can in any way collaborate with the missions, which Don Bosco had so much at heart.

Sr Grazyna Sikora FMA



Social Communication



SB – Don Bosco's magazine

Don Bosco announced on 6 January 1877, in the presence of 211 Salesians, novices, aspirants: "We have decided... to print a Bulletin which will be like the Congregation's newspaper" (BM 13, p. 81). Six months later he asked Brother Peter Barale to tackle the task. He was in charge of the printing press at the Oratory, and at the time had been printing an almost monthly news sheet giving information on printing activity at Valdocco: books, prayer books, news sheets, magazines. The idea was for him to start immediately after the January announcement, so he asked Barale to start transforming his "Bibliofilo Cattolico" (The Catholic Book lover), part of the Salesian collection, into "The Salesian Bulletin Monthly". Barale accepted the job without difficulty – he could not say no to Don Bosco – and so the SB was born, and grew quickly both in print-run and readers. It grew to the point where the Saint broadened the readership out: "Here is my secret. I will send the SB to those who want it and even to those who don't!" (BM 17,670).

Don Bosco believed so much in this new creation that he forbade other publications "which might have the same aim and general nature of the SB" (Regulations 1923 art. 441). He got to the point of calling it "the main support for Salesian work" (BM 17,669), also claiming that "The Salesian Society will prosper if we ensure that the SB is supported and extended" (BM 17,645). So he considered it to be the principal tool for his mission: "The purpose of the SB is to make our activities known as much as possible, for their real purpose (BM 13,260). In effect, Don Bosco wanted a world network of SBs, and he set about creating it: in 1879 he founded the French edition, in 1880 the Argentinian and in 1886 the Spanish. He was aware of the importance of communication and succeeded in making his SB a modern publications tool for Church and civil society. The 10th General Chapter of the Congregation,



for its part, determined that the SB was "the magazine for the whole Society" (Delib. 4,12). It would be up to Michael Rua, his first successor, to frequently recommend that it be read in public, especially at table (Circular Letters. 1/11/1896 item 4 and Regulations 1923 art. 18).

Today the SB appears in 56 editions and 29 languages. There are other editions in the pipeline which may see the light of day. The magazine can be found in 131 Countries, but circulates effectively in some 150. Don Bosco wanted it to be available for everyone. He soon became aware that given the cultural diversity of the peoples for whom it was published, a monolithic version didn't achieve what he hoped for. Today the 56 editions have their own autonomy, each attentive to its own target audience and culture. This is what gives the magazine its up-to-date





character and ability to penetrate. The SB print run worldwide comes to some 15 million per year. Michel Mouillard defined it in two redolent sentences: "A Salesian eye on the world" since it captures and analyses events and efforts with a view to information for education and formation; "An eye on the Salesian world", a real tool for the mission which gives, spreads news about happenings and activities of the Sons of Don Bosco, throughout the world, as an example and stimulus for everyone.

Today the SB appears in 56 editions and 29 languages. There are other editions in the pipeline which may see the light of day.

Returning to Don Bosco for the SB means developing and contextualising the Founder's intuitions. In this sense it is essential that the magazine has a 'church' feel, as well as a Salesian one, and an educational and

youth one – Don Bosco founded us for the young and that idea included both education and evangelisation: The Church's events are ours too, since she is our Mother. Also fundamental is a dialogue with readers which creates strong sympathetic, empathetic bonds.

In today's context we cannot underestimate the SB's presence in "virtual playgrounds" in the Internet (You Tube, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and whatever else), where we find most young people today.

Many SB editions already have a website and some Provinces have an online site with due attention to the proper nature of the medium.

Giancarlo Manieri SDB

Agenzia iNfo Salesiana (Salesian Information Agency)

News from the Salesian World

The "Salesian Social Communication System" (SSCS), the guideline document for the Salesian Congregation in the communications field, reminds us in one of its early paragraphs how Don Bosco had "foreseen too the power of information for animating his spiritual family and for mobilising society for his mission" (SSCS n.5). This belief has become a legacy for his sons who over time in the countries they went to, have made every effort to send information and reports on their work to the Congregational Centre.

Information of this kind was published initially in the Salesian Bulletin and then eventually in a periodical which was sent out in roneoed form. It bore the name of 'Salesian Missionary Agency', and was based in Valdocco, Turin. In January 1956 this title changed to *Agenzia Notizie Salesiane* (in English, *Salesian News Agency*) - ANS.

(98) The ANS office was brought to Rome from the Mother House in Turin in 1972 at the time of the Special General Chapter when the Rector Major and his Council transferred to Via della Pisana in Rome.

The General Council gave it new impulse by restructuring the agency as a true and proper information agency.

With the passing of the years ANS has continued to offer its service of information. In 1992, after careful study and analysis of the Salesian information situation, the General Council gave it new impulse by restructuring the agency as a true and proper information agency with the task of maintaining contact with secular and Catholic media, and providing a positive and forward-looking image of the Salesian Congregation, its work and its reflections. ANS became the "International Salesian information Agency".

With the advent of new technologies ANS has further modified its structures and services. Putting the ANS-mag paper edition aside, the agency opened up to in-

formation and communication via Internet. After the development of the 2000 and then the 2003 website, the ANS website is now in its third re-make.

Opening on 6th May 2007, the new site was far more than a simple "restyling" of earlier versions, but expresses the renewal that the Social Communications Department wanted to make Salesian information more functional and effective. It conforms to W3C standards, and can be simply navigated including through a "text only" view for those who have poor Internet connections.

ANS presents today as a thoroughly up-to-date online magazine; articles, photos, audio and video can be correlated around a central theme so that each news item can be an entry point to the Salesian world. The site was designed with an information approach whose logic comes from the rapid development of the communications world and new forms of journalism and news dissemination.

The inspiration for this evaluation and renewal of ANS was Fr Pascual Chávez Letter "With the Courage of Don Bosco on the New Frontiers of Social Communication", 24 June 2005. In this letter the Rector Major, commenting on Don Bosco's circular on 'Spreading Good Books' written on 19 March 1885, drew up a summary of Salesian teaching on Social Communication and, pulling together the challenges emanating from the communications world, he encouraged an approach which respects the values and principles we find in the Gospel.

The Agency has a network of correspondents and collaborators spread over 130 countries where the Salesians are. By exploiting principles of participative journalism, ANS uses the material it receives, focusing on information regarding Salesian activity in all its aspects. Key areas chosen draw their inspiration from the Salesian charism: youth, education, Church. The point of view from which major events, be they positive or tragic, are viewed is also a Salesian one.

In 2007, along with the renewal of the agency and the development of the new site, three formation gatherings





were held for correspondents and collaborators of ANS, one in Rome from 1-4 March for European provinces; a second in Mexico City from 15 - 18 September for Provinces in North, Central and South America and a third in Cebu from 18 - 21 October for Asia and Oceania.

ANS, publishing Monday to Friday, aims at producing Salesian information for Congregation media (Salesian Bulletin, province sites, magazines), as well as for Church and secular media.

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The renewal which took place in 2007 was accompanied by three other novelties:

- New legal identity. On 17 April 2007 ANS was officially entered into the registers of the Rome Tribunal as a multi-weekly data transmission periodical. This legal recogni-



thus the initial understanding.

- A photographic archive, IMAGE BANK puts at users' disposition all the photos which ANS has collected over the years and which come from around the entire Salesian world.

Those who work in ANS have a daily task of communicating the extraordinary quality of daily commitment of Salesians in the service of the young and the Church. The Biblical image of David and Goliath expresses well the meaning of being information producers on the one hand far from the media hubbub and its strategies, and small in comparison with these great media empires, but we are certain that our efforts produce unexpected results.

Donato Lacedonio SDB

tion allows it to dialogue and interact with other information agencies and develop new projects.

- A new logo. The new identity called for a new logo, so without excessively modifying the existing one the ANS initials were taken up again in "Agenzia Info Salesiana" maintaining

In the vanguard of web progress

Pope John Paul II's famous last words on contemporary communications offer an appropriate context for anyone managing a web site today: 'rapid development!' The Congregation's web site, www.sdb.org fits very much within that context. Over a period of six years it is moving with that rapid development from what we knew as 'Web 1.0' to what is now 'Web 2.0', in line with web sites that are interactive, portals offering a wide range of services, content management systems as a standard way for larger sites to be managed. Attention to standards is paramount, particularly accessibility, since www.sdb.org is visited daily many thousands of times around the globe, including by users with limited access opportunities.

The intention is to develop a web design framework that can be a helpful guide for web site development generally in the Congregation.

(100) An important software development in recent years has been the impact of the twin movements of the Free Software Foundation and Open Source Initiative. The Salesian Congregation is pioneering an approach to web production for a large Religious organization, by drawing on the principles espoused especially by the Free Software Foundation, but reading these in the light of evangelical, educational, ethical and economic considerations - in that order! Hence far more has been involved in the restyling of www.sdb.org than just a slew of technical adjustments which have entailed the site being entirely re-written in an 'open' PHP language and becoming far less dependent on proprietary software. As its underpinning framework, www.sdb.org has adopted the 'Salesian Social Communication System' and begun to extend that 'system' by developing its own web design framework inspired by SSCS. The intention is to develop a web design framework that can be a helpful guide for web site development generally in the Congregation. Today, every province and for that matter most Salesian presences and works have a web site. The central site in Rome is not envisaged as a hierarchical node at the top of that tree, but rather as a pulsing, prime node giving life to a network.



Amongst the pioneering innovations under development for the last three years within the site has been a digital library now containing far in excess of 200,000 digital 'objects'. The library, for the most part entirely open to the public, is built from free and open source software, and may be the largest such digital library of any Religious Congregation worldwide. Its materials are available in more than 15 languages.

Don Bosco made much of the Atlas! He studied those available in his day, and fed his intense love for the world and the salvation of its young people with intimate knowledge of a world that was reaching the conclusion of exploration of the globe's physical surface. Maps and peoples populated his missionary dreams. It is no surprise, then, to find the map, by now fully geo-referenced





thanks to Google, as a prime navigation device in www.sdb.org. And as Don Bosco himself now goes on pilgrimage around the world, in the Casket that is drawing millions to reaffirm their devotion but more importantly their apostolic fervour, his visit to each Region is accompanied by a blog hosted by www.sdb.org

Julian B. Fox SDB



A communications culture of respect, dialogue, friendship

When Fr Stefano Nam, Provincial of Korea Province, recently addressed the meeting of Salesian Social Communications Delegates from the East Asia-Oceania Region in Seoul (March 2009), he indicated that in his view, Salesian centres in the region were well-equipped in terms of hardware, but needed to ensure the 'software of Salesian values' was always pre-eminent. It was good advice, and another way of emphasizing Pope Benedict XVI's 2009 Communications Day message to promote a culture of respect, dialogue and friendship.

'Telling the Story of Jesus', the First Asian Mission Congress theme, has touched a nerve in many Salesian communicators throughout the region.

(102) As a Region, East Asia-Oceania has faced up over a number of years to its peculiar set of communications challenges in terms of Salesian Regions. Most Salesian Regions are continentally based and even single-language based. East Asia-Oceania, instead, contains a sixth of the world's languages, an enormous range of access opportunities from almost none to the best on the planet, and the widely diverse cultures of Asia and Oceania, separated, in many cases by large expanses of ocean. The region has developed an 'ecosystem' of communications opportunities over a long period. For the past twelve years it has had an email newsletter which comes out almost daily, certainly several times a week, well fed from contributors around the region. This newsletter, *austraAsia*, as it is titled, is now close to its 3,000th edition and provides a veritable living history of the region. The region also saw the birth of the first-ever Salesian web site, back in 1992, a website that began in its province of origin but now serves the entire region. Every province in the region now has its website, indeed almost every school or parish or other Salesian activity in these provinces by now has its own website. Many Salesians run their own blogs. The *Salesian Bulletin* is produced in a number of the major languages of the region.



But communications, 'Social Communications' in particular, is far more than websites, blogs and email. And so it is that a number of Salesians around the region are doing precisely what the Pope has urged (and Fr Nam above has hinted at): adding the 'software' of Christian values. This is achieved through education in the communications centres that we find developing in the Region, be it the Don Bosco Media School in Seoul for students who might not otherwise succeed in education but are particularly competent in this field, or the Don Bosco Sihanoukville Communications department which is preparing young Cambodians to be active in





media in their country, especially in radio and TV, or the Bachelor of Arts programme in Talisay City, Cebu, with Majors in Religious Education and Pastoral Communication, or for that matter the regular sessions for young people on communications in Honiara, Solomon Islands. It is also being achieved through publications produced by Salesians from the Region which urge profound reflection on some of the issues which digital culture confronts us with.

There has been one further great impulse to communications thinking in the EAO Region, and this has come

from within the wider Church within the Region: 'Telling the Story of Jesus', the First Asian Mission Congress theme, has touched a nerve in many Salesian communicators throughout the region. An effort is currently under way to collect and publish 'stories of faith lived in a Salesian context' from every part of the region.

Hilario Seo SDB

The Best to the Least – The Yellagiri Saga

Professional Higher Education in Information Technology for the Poorest

"Thanks to Don Bosco – what else can I say?" says George Joseph through a broad smile as he looks up from his computer. This young computer engineer is working on a US software project. And what is so unusual about it? George is one of the thousand or more computer professionals in his twenties who has literally made it from rags to riches – thanks to the education and training provided by the Salesians at BICS INFO TECH, Don Bosco Centre, Yellagiri Hills, Tamil Nadu, India. BICS stands for Bosco Integrated Computing Services.

George, whose father is an illiterate gardener in a school, is perhaps better off than Selva* whose parents eked out a living, washing the clothes of the children in an orphanage or Augustine* who was abandoned on the streets along with his brother when he was hardly four (*names changed to protect privacy). Today they are world class programmers in Multinational Companies, often flying to and from the USA and Europe!!

The Rector Major Fr. Pascual Chávez was so captivated during his visit to Yellagiri Hills on 5 February 2009, that he said "I am very glad to come to this beautiful 'Salesian mountain', I have heard about the innovative work that your community is doing here for the poor May this model be imitated elsewhere, so that we can bring the best of developments to the poorest, particularly those in the rural areas...."

The seed for this success story was sown by Fr. Francis Guezou sdb, a French missionary who climbed up to this God forsaken hill and put up a hut among the hostile tribal people in 1962. For the next 18 years with the help of some lay collaborators and sisters, he single-handedly worked to provide primary education to the poor. Yet, poverty and unemployment had seemed too huge a demon to tame.

"But we had to move to the next level. We had to empower the minds of the youth to ensure employment, growth and development both in their own lives and in the society they lived in," says Fr. Thaddeus, the Director of BICS INFO TECH. He and his friend, Fr. M. Arokiaraj,



joined hands with Fr. Guezou in 1998 to start the computer centre on Yellagiri Hills that would offer quality education and training in Information Technology to enable the youth to find jobs quickly.

**I have heard about the innovative work that
your community is doing here for the poor...
May this model be imitated elsewhere,
so that we can bring the best of
developments to the poorest.**

When quality computer education remains the privilege of only the rich in the cities, the Salesians at BICS INFO TECH have dared to reach out to the poorest of the rural poor. Admission to this institute is strictly restricted to intelligent students who are from socially and economically backward families. Preference is given to the untouchables and children of illiterate parents. The house of every student is visited personally and only after ensuring that he or she would otherwise have no chance of a higher education, the student is admitted.





The students pay only one tenth of the actual cost of the education. The Software Development Centre at BICS INFOTECH – a gift of the French benefactors of Fr. Guezou - with the state of the art computer facilities, while developing Software for organizations worldwide, has also proved to be an excellent training ground for the students to gain hands-on training in most recent technologies. One major reason for the immediate and 100% employment of the students after completion of their training is the impeccable communication skills in English, developed by innovative methods.

**We must give the best to the poor
because they are poor.**

Many professional and technical colleges in the southern states of India borrow this system of education. Most of these students, now well settled in life, have become guiding lights for their families. The growing network of these students has started supporting the mission and have become our ambassadors now. "We must give the best to the poor because they are poor," Fr. Guezou used to say. And Mari Anand an alumnus now working in USA muses with gratitude: "...Where would we have been without Don Bosco! Nowhere! You have given us dignity...." And Josephine, who has established her own IT firm in Bangalore says much more: "We learned in BICS not merely information technology, but above all, the family spirit of Don Bosco, life-coping skills and a love for God!"

Leo Maria Francis

The Social Communication Section

Don Bosco Technical School, Sihanoukville - Cambodia

The Social Communication section of the Don Bosco Technical School in the city port of Sihanoukville is an academic program created to form agents of Social Communication in the areas of digital journalism, Internet, audiovisual production and Social Communication processes.

The program, along with the other technical sections, takes two years spread over four semesters. In that time, the young people who are selected from poor communities, learn the basic concepts of Social Communication, journalism and production in mass media. Emphasis on English as a second language and skills in systems and programming are also basic studies.

An academic program created to form agents of Social Communication in the areas of digital journalism, Internet, audiovisual production and Social Communication processes.

The support of professional volunteers in the area of communication, the access to websites dedicated to education and information, the planning of seminars with local and foreign professionals and the contact with other organizations related with information and Social Communication, belong to the learning methodology.

The section was founded in the technical school of Don Bosco Sihanoukville because the port is considered a strategic site for the development of the country, a space of national and international commerce, in an ongoing process of industrialization and a centre for international tourism. At the same time, it is a site where there are some social evils that affect modern Cambodia. They can be fought by implementing the Salesian Preventive System. We are talking of problems like abuse of children and women, drugs, prostitution, sexual tourism, the growing problem of beggars and the equally growing reality of street children. In such a context, our communication is oriented to enlightening these dramatic situations by promoting values, formative campaigns and opening new spaces of expression for marginalized communities.



The first students came in October 2007 – just 12 boys. Nowadays there are 24 students. We have kept this reduced number in order to guarantee the effectiveness of the formation and also because the project is new. We have an audiovisual studio, a workshop for webmasters, a library, a computer room and a printing department.

The section is also the first phase of the project of Social Communication for the Salesian Mission of Cambodia with the intention of a future Salesian Center of Com-





munication. It should be able to produce the Salesian Bulletin in Khmer language, will have a cultural radio station, a television channel, publications, videos and other material to support Salesian vocations and human values for a nation like Cambodia.

Fr Albeiro Rodas SDB







The Salesian Family an ecclesial movement

I have repeatedly presented the Salesian Family as a Movement. It could look like we are just using a fashionable term. There are very many ecclesial movements today involving thousands of people. We are not following a fashion here, but picking up our historical heritage. What Don Bosco began when he started the Salesian Family is really describable as a "vast movement of people for the salvation of the young" (C. 5).

But what is the specific nature of the Salesian Family as a movement?

It is a Movement, meaning something dynamic. This explains why it continues not only to grow in numbers of members but also in the number of groups. There are currently 27 which are officially a part of it, but at least another thirty are already operating in this way, even if for the moment they still do not have official recognition, and some of them are most interesting and significant. These branches of the tree will continue to increase in order to respond to ever new needs.

It is a spiritual movement: the fruit of the Holy Spirit who inspired it and who continues to re-create it. The Salesian Family is not a project born of discussion around a table and nor is it simply the result of Don Bosco's astuteness. The Salesian Constitutions tell us expressly that it is the work of the Holy Spirit, brought about through Mary's motherly intervention. Its nature is such. This assures us that we are dealing with something charismatic, that is, a gift of God in service of Church and the world; and it is good to know that the founding element of the Salesian Family is really the Holy Spirit.

So we are dealing with an *apostolic movement*: addressed fully, that is, to the mission it has to carry out. It is not a club for friends who like being together, nor is it a philanthropic society. It is a body working within the Church, on behalf of society. So we need to say we are dealing with a vocation. This is the calling to continue Christ's work, with a particular mandate: to be dedicated, by means of education, to the salvation of the young, especially those who are poor or who experience situations of real difficulty. This is exactly what Don Bosco did.



So what do we have to do to live this experience of "Salesian Movement" well?

In practice I would like to invite you to take three important steps. Here are the objectives I propose for the immediate future.

**A vast movement of people
for the salvation of the young.**

"Get to know each other better", which means getting to know the situation of our beautiful Salesian Family. The Groups need to know about each other, there need to be opportunities to meet in practice, we need to celebrate the fellowship that brings us together under the same charism of our common Father: Don Bosco. It will require much attention to appreciate specific gifts, those of religious and consecrated members, the feminine and





masculine groups, those who are consecrated in the world, those who live in common, those who work in structures and carry out their apostolate in the everyday, the little groups and the big ones.

A single thread breaks easily when it's put to work. But lots of threads entwined make a rope that nobody can break.

The second important step is to *"be formed together"*. This is a belief we must acquire and a praxis we must commence. Our formation has its contents and points of reference which we must give our attention to. The study of Don Bosco above all, in order to know, understand and take up his charismatic project and his criteria for pastoral activity. It could be very useful to know about the positive pastoral experiences of pastoral activity, as a Salesian Family, in each group's, Congregation's story.

The third step, the most important one, is to achieve *"teamwork"*. A single thread, Don Bosco used to teach, breaks easily when it's put to work. But lots of threads entwined make a rope that nobody can break. So it is unthinkable that Salesian Family Groups living in the same geographical area, facing up to the same challenges in that setting would choose to work apart, each doing its own thing. With a lively sense of local Church, the Salesian Family, facing up to all the pastoral, social, local challenges and with all its specific commitments within the Salesian mission, could set out the urgent pastoral needs and offer concrete pastoral solutions, giving rise to a common project in that area.

This is no dream I am offering you! It is already happening in many parts of the world. But there is still some distance between what we are doing and what we could be doing. It's time to get ourselves into gear!

Fr Pascual Chávez
Rector Major

The fruit of good seed

A real school of holiness

"There is no sound tree that produces rotten fruit, nor again a rotten tree that produces sound fruit. For every tree can be told by its own fruit..." (Lk 6:43-44).

This sentence from Luke is well suited to what has been the development of the Salesian charism throughout its history. Don Bosco interpreted his life in a Gospel sense, putting it completely at the service of the mission to the young. From this experience of life and mission a real school of holiness came about, an authentic good seed which gave rise to a good tree, excellent fruits, "fruits of holiness".

Don Bosco's first successor, *Blessed Michael Rua*, was considered by those still alive from Don Bosco's times as a "new Don Bosco". He had made a programme of life out of fidelity to the founder. Because of his wise leadership, Salesians went from 773 to 4000, Houses (colleges, institutes, missions) from 57 to 345, Provinces (religiously speaking) from 6 to 34 in 33 countries. Paul VI beatified him in 1972, saying: "He turned a stream into a river".

Don Bosco's third successor, *Blessed Fr Philip Rinaldi*, re-activated the inner life of Salesians, showing absolute confidence in God and boundless trust in the Help of Christians; it is said of him that the only thing missing in him was Don Bosco's voice. He increased the number of missionary expeditions (1800 Salesians left for the missions during his time of leadership of the Congregation), he closely accompanied the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, fostered the beginnings of the Past Pupils of the FMA, increased the numbers amongst the male group of Past Pupils, saw to the setting up of the *Società Editrice Internazionale* (SEI) and began a new group in the Salesian Family: the "Volunteers of Don Bosco", a Secular Institute proposing consecrated life in the world, interpreting the Salesian mission in this secular sense along with service to the young.

Saint *Mary Domenica Mazzarello*, intelligent, strong-minded and gifted with deep affection, co-founded with Don Bosco the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Having grown up in a family setting marked by a solid Christian life and tireless work in the fields, after

a serious illness she gave herself to the education of girls in her village. Her encounter with Don Bosco (in 1864) was decisive; it provided her with a complete opening for her apostolic desire. Together, on the 5th August 1872, they founded a new religious family in the Church for the good of the young. From this splendid fruit a new apostolic reality came into being which today numbers around 15.000 Daughters of Mary Help of Christians amongst whom too are splendid models of holiness: *Blessed Madeleine Morano*, *Blessed Maria Romero*, *Blessed Eusebia Palomino*, *Venerable Sr Teresa Valsè Pantellini* and so many other "women of God"!

**We have to say that the tiny seed
has truly become a huge tree
and that this tree is laden with good fruits!**

Amongst the Salesian Cooperators there is *Blessed Alexandrina Maria da Costa*; after escaping an act of violence to her, she suffered for nigh on 30 years, first immobilised then eventually paralysed. Sustained not only spiritually but also physically by the Eucharist (for a long time she was nourished only and exclusively by the consecrated host) she made her promise as a Cooperator and offered her sufferings for the Salesian mission to the young. Another splendid figure is the *Servant of God Attilio Giordani*, with his deep Eucharistic and Marian spirituality. At a certain point, to give of himself even more completely, he chose to go to Brazil with his wife where he dedicated his life as a volunteer along with his children. We should also recall *Cardinal Guarino* whose Cause for Beatification is in process; he was an admirer of Don Bosco. It was he who first accepted the Salesians into Sicily. He suggested his family leave their earthly goods to the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, which allowed the opening of the Houses at Ali for the FMA and Messina for the Salesians. And finally, in the Salesian spirit he founded the Institute of the Little Servants of the Holy Family (1889), known today as the *Apostles of the Holy Family*.

Blessed Louis Variara was a Salesian who had vowed himself to the good of others, those who were neglected,





especially lepers in Agua de Dios, Colombia. There he transformed the lives of more than 800 of the sick, along with their families and others who lived there, through a leadership that was both full of joy and intensely spiritual. Sharing his apostolic passion with the lepers, in 1905 he founded the Congregation of the *Hijas de los Sagrados Coraones de Jesus y Maria* (Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary). Also significant is the life of *Bishop Joseph Cognata*, Salesian Bishop of Bova Marina, and founder of the Oblates of the Sacred Heart. In 1939 he began to suffer deeply from calumnies that meant he had to give up his role as a Bishop. He spent twenty two years of inner martyrdom spent as a silent oblation. We expect the rapid process of his Cause for Beatification..

There is not enough space to witness to all the other no less splendid fruits of holiness: *St Louis Versiglia* and *Saint Callistus Caravario*, the first Salesian martyrs, murdered in China for defending the virtue of some female catechists; *Laura Vicua*, *Artemides Zatti* and *Celestino Namuncur*, the first results of the Salesian charism in America; *Venerable Simon Srugi*, *Sr Maria Trocatti*, *Fr Giuseppe Quadrio*, *Bishop Ferrando*, *Fr Charles dalla Torre*, *Fr Cimatti*, the many martyrs in Spain and others... We have to say that the tiny seed has truly become a huge tree and that this tree is laden with good fruits!

I would not want to finish without presenting a person especially dear to me, *Nino Baglieri*, Volunteer With Don Bosco (CDB), who passed away only two years ago in Modica, Sicily. As a young 17 year old worker he suffered total paralysis after a brutal fall from scaffolding. After experiencing a period of intense inner rebellion, the Spirit made inroads into his heart. He experienced his painful circumstances intensely but as an offering and as prayer, and became a spiritual point of reference for many people; he proclaimed the Lord to the young and to adults through the power of the Spirit. "We are all called to holiness", he left in writing as a note for the young, "nobody is excluded, it just depends on us, on how we say our "Yes" to the Lord. And if someone feels in his heart that the voice of the Lord is calling him to follow him more closely through consecrated life do not be afraid to give your total "Yes". A yes to life!".

The Salesian Family today has eight Saints, a hundred and sixteen Blessed (many of whom are martyrs), eight Venerables, twenty eight Servants of God. In the case of many others the first steps are in motion for studying their lives in view of a recognition of their holiness. God has, in fact, been great with us and we are grateful.

The Salesian Family

From Don Bosco's heart to the ends of the world

Don Bosco's great heart and tireless mind thought not only of the Salesian Congregation. By interpreting and at times anticipating his own times, Don Bosco began other groups like the Salesian Sisters, Cooperators, and the Mary Help of Christians Association. After him his sons, listening to the Spirit, gave rise to lay or religious institutes creating a vast movement dedicated to the salvation of the young.

The Salesians, as the first-born, the core, are called to accept and recognise all these components of the Salesian Family as brothers and sisters; a grateful and joyful acceptance of diversity, manifestations of the Spirit who speaks in many tongues; the willingness to walk together towards a shared objective: bring the Kingdom of God to young people and the poor.

The Salesian Family today is made up of 27 groups – and others wait to be added. Religious and lay, inspired by Don Bosco's charism and educational system, they contribute to the growth and development of the Kingdom of God dedicating themselves especially to the education of the young who are poorest and most in need.

The Salesian Rector Major is the point of reference for the Salesian Family. As the successor of Don Bosco, he is called to give charismatic unity and nurture the apostolic outlook of the various groups. Continuing a tradition started by Don Bosco himself, each year the Rector Major entrusts a Strenna to the Groups, a message which becomes the object of study, reflection and planning and a source of inspiration for shared pastoral activity.

**We have to say that the tiny seed
has truly become a huge tree
and that this tree is laden with good fruits!**

From time to time the World Consulting Body of the Salesian Family meets. This group is made up of representatives of the Family. Led by the Vicar of the Rector Major, this body is called to coordinate the groups seeking mutual understanding and relationships. In their various local settings, national or regional, the various Salesian



Family Groups seek to interact with a view to creating a common and shared activity on behalf of as many young people as possible.

The Spirituality Days of the Salesian Family are a special occasion which, over a period of almost thirty years now has brought the groups together from five continents. In recent years these days have helped gain a deeper understanding of and have helped put into practice the Rector Major's Strenna.

2009, which was marked by a Strenna dedicated to the Salesian Family, saw new groups added, amongst whom:





Canção Nova, is an international lay movement involved in evangelisation especially through communications media. Begun in 1978 with 12 young people led by a Salesian, Fr Jonas Abib, the movement draws its inspiration from no. 45 of "Evangelii Nuntiandi" which urges the use of Social Communications media for evangelisation.

The movement is based in Cachoeira Paulista, in Brazil, and that is now a real centre developed with structures for evangelisation such as the "Dom João Hipólito de Moraes", centre that can hold 70 thousand people, the "mio Signore" centre, with 4 thousand places and the

"São Paulo" auditorium with 700. On 3rd November 2008 the Vatican recognised *Canção Nova* as an Association of the Faithful.

The Disciples, aka the Don Bosco Secular Institute, is a male and female public ecclesial association begun in India in 1973 under the inspiration of Salesian Fr Joseph D'Souza. Also known as the Don Bosco Secular Institute, this group is a male and female public ecclesial association begun in India in 1973 under the inspiration of Salesian Fr Joseph D'Souza. The male group was added to the first group of women in 1983. On 21st April 2000 Ambikapur diocese gave ecclesial recognition to this

secular institute. The Disciples, drawing inspiration from the Gospel verse where Jesus entrusts the mission to 72 disciples, proclaim the Gospel, teach catechism, look after the sick and the poor. Today there are more than 400 of them in 44 dioceses of India and 6 in Italy.

The Congregation of the Sisters of St Michael the Archangel, also known as the Michaelite Sisters. The Congregation of the Sisters of St Michael the Archangel was founded in Poland, at the end of the 19th Century, by Blessed Bronislaus Markiewicz and Servant of God Mother Anna Kaworek. In 1956 the President of the Polish Episcopal Commission issued the Decree later confirmed by the Congregation for Religious, which recognised the Institute as an Institute of Pontifical Right.

The Michaelite Sisters combine a contemplative attitude with practical apostolic charity in pedagogy, catechetics, social and charitable work, parish ministry and missions. The Michaelite charism is contained in the two mottos of their founders: "One who is like God" and "Work and temperance".

The Congregation, led today by Sr Natanaela Bednarczk, numbers 300 Sisters in Poland, Byelorussia, Ukraine, Germany, France, Cameroun, Italy.

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The Sisters of Maria Auxiliatrix came from the idea of a Salesian priest, Fr M.C. Antony, who, on 13 May 1976 set up a Pious Union with four girls, involved in social work. Thanks to the support of Fr Schoolz, a Salesian working with Fr M.C. Antony, the rehabilitation centre, Vyasarpadi, in Tamil Nadu in South India was set up for young girls who had been abandoned in poverty. After the founder's death on 23 January 1990, the Provincial of Chennai, Fr Vincent Durairaj, appointed Fr Rozario Krishnaraj as ecclesiastical Assistant to the Pious Union

The "Sisters of Maria Auxiliatrix" became a Congregation of Diocesan Right in 1999 approved by Bishop James Masilamony Arul Das, then Archbishop of Madras and Mylapore. His successor, Archbishop Malayappan Chinnappa, sdb, approved the Constitutions, which were reviewed in the light of the ecclesiastical magisterium on 15 December 2005. The SMA Charism is expressed through the motto "look after poor and abandoned girls".

Today the "Sisters of Mary Auxiliatrix" number around 110 Sisters, spread over 23 communities in seven diocese of India. Some communities work closely with the Salesians. The main SMA activities are formal and informal education for poor girls, evangelisation, orphanages

and day centres. Involved as they are in the social sector, the "Sisters of Mary Auxiliatrix" network with other groups in their own areas and in rural area

Donato Lacedonio SDB



Salesian Family Groups today

Salesian Society of St Francis de Sales – Salesians of Don Bosco:	16,092
Daughters of Mary Help of Christians:	14,655
Salesian Cooperators Association:	24,196
Past Pupils (male and female) of Don Bosco:	97,357
Past Pupils (male and female) of the FMA:	130,000
Volunteers of Don Bosco:	1,308
Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary:	378
Salesian Oblates of the Sacred Heart of Jesus:	221
Apostles of the Holy Family:	69
Sisters of Charity of Miyazaki:	1068
Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians:	1011
Daughters of the Holy Redeemer:	109
Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary:	109
Sisters of Jesus the Adolescent:	43
Damas Salesianas:	3000
Mary Help of Christians Association:	35,000
Sisters Catechists of Mary Help of Christians:	500
Daughters of the Queenship of Mary Immaculate:	57
Volunteers with Don Bosco:	62
Witnesses of the Resurrection - 2000:	650
Congregation of St Michael the Archangel:	357
Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection:	50
Sisters Announcers of the Lord:	23
The Disciples:	400
Canção Nova:	
Sisters of St. Michael the Archangel (Michaelites):	261
The Sisters of Maria Auxiliatrix:	110



Antoni Domenech (12.04.43 – 19.07.09)

Sign and Bearer of the Love of God for the Young

Kenosis means "emptying" oneself and refers in particular to Jesus who became one with human beings to the point of dying on the Cross.

It happened to be 1987, a day like any other, a morning like any other, when the young students of theology were attentively following the explanations of Fr Antoni Domenech. He was explaining, patiently but with a profound sense of pedagogical style as well, the mysteries of faith, helping us to know Jesus Christ. We were fond of him and he of us, and he taught us to dialogue with the culture of our time and have an open approach.

There was also no lack of personal explanations which he offered us in community gatherings. Antoni was the Rector of the community and found time to look after the confreres, anyone who was ill, and indeed all the students of theology.

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It was an Autumn afternoon, and the abundant rains had destroyed the walls of the house where one of the Youth Centre boys lived. Antoni was the first one to go to their aid. At that time we were working at the Youth Centre which from the beginning had been there for the very poor. Just in front of us there was the suburb called Carmelo full of street kids and drug victims; especially the heroin addicts one used find there in the 80's. Antoni played with the children, cleaned up after them, repaired whatever was broken and always had a kind word and a smile. Antoni presided at the Mass every Saturday and it was always a liturgy close to the minds and hearts of the people who came from all over Spain for Mass in this chapel which they themselves had helped build. There were young people who came to Mass there wanting to be Catholics in that church, even though the Church generally seemed far from them. Every two months the group of leaders went away with Antoni to reflect on the process we had followed and on our own faith. He would organise everything and after listening to us he would then set about doing the cooking to brighten up our lives.

But David's story is one we just have to return to. It was Antoni who did everything to salvage what was left and

at the end we understood that he was communicating his faith through life. He was good and kind, ready to make his own life available for the rest of us. His simplicity and generosity was apparent whenever he was amongst us.

**We need to go to David's home;
the rain has destroyed the walls
and the house is under water!**

Whenever we were doing theatre he would be the drama teacher, and I recall him saying "when you look into the eyes of the other actor, your face should cause him to react with fear"

That was one evening in the Youth Centre. The play was one of the well-known Spanish classics for this kind of theatre (The Terrible Homobono). He would make sure that the parents were part of the theatre experience too for the youngsters. Antoni re-wrote the play scripts so that both boys and girls had a role.

There were so many things that had to be attended to from the smallest picture frame to the big backdrop but at the end it would be a marvellous show put on by the young people from the Youth Centre. We can recall so many well-presented plays. The theatre group grew in number and friendship. The plays became a song of joy and happiness in a suburb that could never have imagined itself transformed into grace and joy from its usual ugliness and coldness.

This is why each day he read his life through the meaning of his actions. They were the same pair of hands, Antoni's, that after rewriting these play scripts, consoled the sick, played with the children, directed the theatre, helped the poor, put things back in order and finally consecrated the bread of life in the Eucharist. Like many other Salesians I am convinced that God used his hands to shape my Salesian vocation.



They were the same pair of hands that after rewriting these play scripts, consoled the sick, played with the children, directed the theatre, helped the poor, put things back in order and finally consecrated the bread of life in the Eucharist.

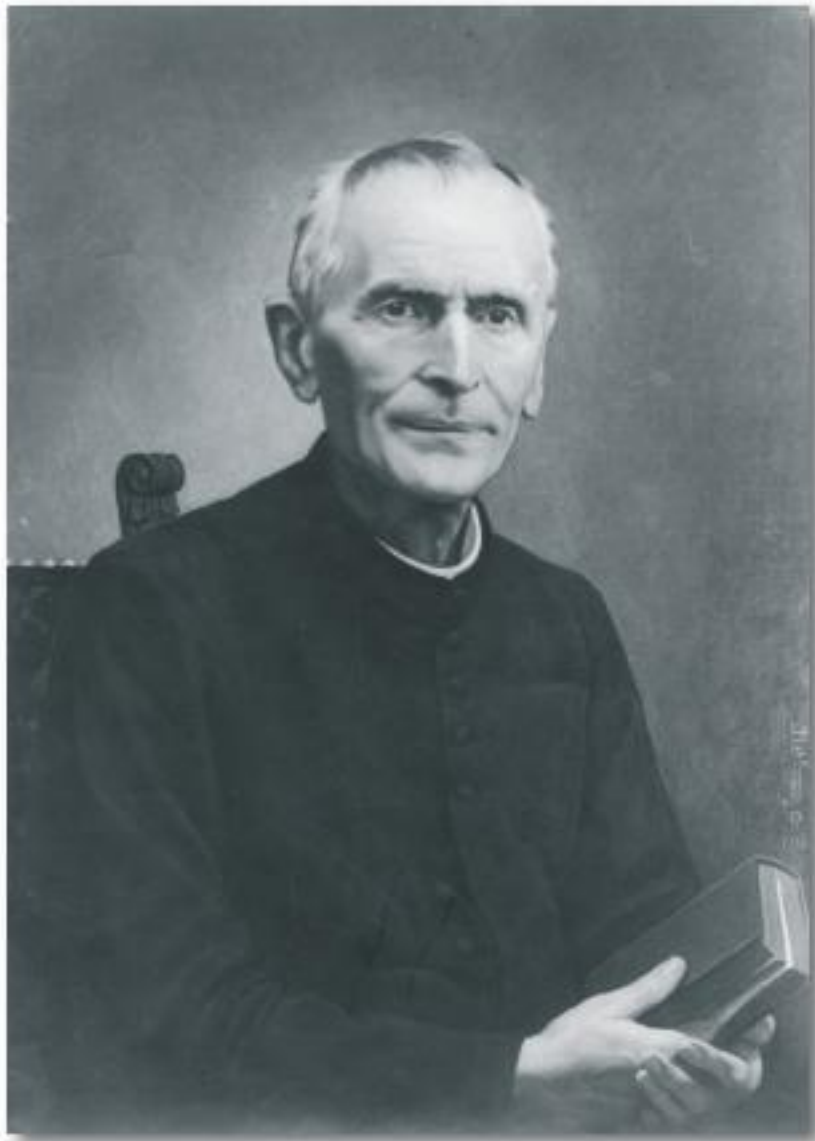
Today when I am amidst the life of the young and find them despairing, wondering about the sense of it all, and then when I realise that I am sign and bearer of God's love for the young, I realise that even if they are unaware of who Antoni was, they owe much to him. He knew how to do all this through theological and intellectual reflection but also through his concrete commitment and activity amongst the poor. He offered his deep spiritual life and his leadership.

On 20th July 2009 his worker's hands stopped and they are now in God's hands. I thank God for having known and lived with Antoni. This privilege becomes a commitment and I ask God that I may be able to bring his love in the same simple and generous form that was Antoni's. Those who lived with him owe him a great debt that can only be paid by giving the same gift of witness we saw in him.

Josan Montull SDB

Strenna 2010

"Sir, we want to see Jesus"
In imitation of Don Rua,
as authentic disciples
and zealous apostles
let us bring the Gospel to the young





Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco
Via della Pisana, 1111 - 00163 Roma, Italy
Tel. no. (+39) 06 656.121
Fax no. (+39) 06 656.12.556
E-mail: rmg@sdb.org