

NouvellesSalésiennes Salesian News

Novembre 2006 November No.87

Bulletin mensuel électronique sdbsem@interlinx.qc.ca

INTERAMERICA PROVINCIALS' MEETING. Between October 16 and 21, 2006, I attended the annual meeting of the provincials of the Interamerica Region which took place in Aibonito, Puerto Rico. The purpose of these meetings is the ongoing formation of provincials and the coordination of the life of the 14 provinces of our Region. It felt both familiar and strange to be back after a six years' absence. The week was animated by Fr. Esteban Ortiz, our Regional.

This year some of the days were animated by the vicar of the Rector Major, Fr. Adriano Bregolin, and by the economer general, Fr. Giovanni Mazzali. All of us remember Fr. Gianni who preached our 2005 province retreat. Fr. Bregolin spoke about issues linked to the governance of the Congregation, the 26th General Chapter, as well as the Salesian Family. In regard to the latter subject his stress was on the proper use of the Consulta – the council of the SDBs, FMAs and the Cooperators. This consulta is the best tool to unify all members of the Salesian Family into the apostolic force that we all can better be together as one.

Fr. Mazzali dealt with very precise and concrete issues linked to the vow of poverty. In general the Congregation is seen as "getting too comfortable." A more serious living of poverty can help us be more significant to those to whom we minister. Poverty is also expressed in tighter follow-up to money issues in each province.

We were also blessed with the visit of Cardinal Obando Bravo of Nicaragua. Although now retired, I could still feel his energy and commitment to the cause of the poor in Latin America.

The weather in Puerto Rico was not like the postcards we see! We were high in the mountains in the centre of the island far from the coastal beaches. We had a little sun each morning, but after that, it would rain most of the rest of the day. So I did not make much progress on my suntan!

What was most pleasant was spending these days with the two provincials from the US, Fr. Jim Heuser and Fr. David Purdy. They send greetings to all they know.

All in all, not exactly a holiday but a time to be closer to the Superiors who serve us and to reflect on my role of animation as Superior.

Fr. Richard Authier sdb

MONTREAL. The YLC is becoming known to Catholic youth movements across the island of Montreal. On Sunday, October 22, the COR (Movement *Christ In Others Retreat*) held an evening of youth animation and prayer at the Centre which welcomed youth from various parishes, including some of our own from Missione Maria Ausiliatrice and St. Joseph. The bright, freshly painted walls and newly waxed floors made quite an impression. The chapel was conducive to a wonderful prayer service on the theme of Christian service, which was prepared and animated by the youth.

The kids are back! *Faith & Family*, our catechism program kicked into gear on Saturday, Oct. 14. Over the summer, our 1000 catechumens were organized into groups around 174

catechists. The high ratio of returning catechists is a blessing; they bring much confidence, professionalism, and zeal to their lay apostolate.

At our English Masses on Saturday, Oct. 24, and Sunday, Oct. 25 were commissioned our various lay ministers at the beginning of our pastoral year. Between catechists, musicians, lectors, choir members, ministers of Holy Communion and altar servers, there were over 200 parishioners on hand. Hopefully this will stimulate others to get involved too.

We celebrated our last wedding of the year on Sat., Oct. 28, and on Sun., Oct. 29 we launched the new season of Marriage Preparation courses. A team of volunteers graciously prepared lunch for the couples. This helped to set the family tone for our courses, which are offered over 4 Sunday afternoons, from 2:00 to 5:30 pm.

SHERBROOKE. Le 15 octobre, la paroisse Ste Claire de Montréal, remise au diocèse par les salésiens il y a plus de 2 ans, tenait l'une de ses principales manifestations de la célébration de son centenaire. Le Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte présidait l'eucharistie, accompagné de plusieurs prêtres concélébrants. Les salésiens étaient représentés par deux anciens curés, les PP. Trottier (1983-1995) et Parent (1995-2004), par le P. Cossette ancien vicaire (1984-1990) et les Frères Gérard Richard et Marcel Gauthier. Dans son homélie le Cardinal invita les paroissiens à s'impliquer dans leur communauté et à donner généreusement de leur temps et énergie afin qu'elle soit vivante, leur disant toute la confiance qu'il place en eux. Bravo à M. l'abbé François Baril, le curé actuel, résidant à St-François d'Assise, et à Mme Christiane P. Vanier, coordonnatrice des activités paroissiales, pour une célébration signifiante et bien préparée. Dans l'après-midi, la «délégation salésienne» venue de Sherbrooke se rendit visiter la très intéressante exposition sur l'histoire de la paroisse à la Maison de la Culture Mercier.

À la mi-octobre, la Corporation du Séminaire tint son assemblée annuelle, au terme de laquelle les membres du conseil d'administration furent élus. La communauté est représentée à la Corporation et au conseil par les PP. Léonard et Trottier. La clientèle étudiante s'annonce bien pour l'an prochain au Salésien: plus de 270 jeunes se présentèrent avec leur famille aux «*Portes Ouvertes* » le 22 octobre. Une autre «*P.O.*» se tiendra le 11 novembre. Les parents font noter l'esprit de famille qui règne dans les couloirs et locaux du Séminaire lors de ces rencontres.

Le 28 octobre, nous avons accueilli 90 finissants(es) accompagnés pour la plupart de leurs parents. Ce fut une très belle soirée de reconnaissance pour ces jeunes qui recevaient officiellement leur diplôme d'études secondaires. Le maître de cérémonie, M. Nicolas Duquette, a animé avec beaucoup de tact cette soirée. La remise de l'album- souvenirs (travail de Mme Julie-Andrée Turgeon) fut également un beau moment. Pendant cette soirée, David Brodeur a été le récipiendaire de la médaille de la Gouverneure Générale du Canada, ayant maintenu une moyenne générale de 95,5% en 4° et 5° secondaire. M. François Lessard ('76), docteur en mathématiques et ancien du Salésien, est le 1er récipiendaire du *Prix Périclès*. Il s'illustre sur le plan intellectuel et a été présenté comme modèle pour nos jeunes par Messieurs Jean Paré et Robert Lacroix. Un vin d'honneur clôtura le tout avec le dévoilement de la traditionnelle mosaïque des finissants (es) de la promotion 2005-2006. Mme Julie Tremblay, agente de développement et de communication, est le chef d'orchestre de ce nouvel événement qui deviendra assurément une autre belle tradition du Salésien.

Dans un tout autre ordre d'événements, quelque 350 «petits monstres» se présentèrent à la porte de notre résidence, rue du Québec, la soirée de l'Halloween pour recevoir leurs bonbons et un petit carnet confectionné par le Fr. Marcel.

Et maintenant, à vos tugues! L'hiver est proche...

TORONTO. Our new Fr. Provincial, Richard Authier paid our Toronto-Hamilton community a friendly visit from Oct. 6 to 9. He met with the community as well as with several confreres individually.

Fr. Joseph Occhio successfully underwent his hip replacement operation on Oct. 11. He spent one week in the hospital and another week at a rehabilitation center. He recently returned to the parish rectory, now walking with the help of a cane. His courage and stamina have been admirable. He thanks everyone for their prayers and adds: "Keep them coming."

Fr. George and our young boarder David McConkey have been enjoying their Thursday night bowling league activities especially at their recent Halloween costume evening when they appeared respectively as Bozo the clown and as Mr. Incredible. We won't speak about scores!

The Salesian Sisters' Porterfield community welcomed all the Salesian confreres for Thanksgiving turkey and trimmings. Fr. Joe Ho entertained us all with his many riddles. -- Fr. Richard administered the Sacrament of the sick to Fr. Occhio at evening prayer. -- Fr. Kennedy participated in his first Toronto Marathon on Oct. 15. He finished the 42 km trek at his own pace...

Fr. Frank Kelly was invited to give the homily at Fr. Gerry Pellegrino's funeral Mass held at West Haverstraw. Many memorable stories were recounted about the dedication, courage and cheerfulness of this confrere. May he rest in peace! -- Bro. Bernie has initiated a bi-monthly Sunday evening prayer group composed of young adults and held at the Salesian Residence. In addition, he hosts the preparations for the upcoming Salesian Leadership Retreat on Nov. 24 to 26. -- Dave Dishart, a former graduate from Don Bosco Secondary school is the new part-time youth minister at St. Benedict's parish. He is mentored by Bro. Bernie.

The St. Dominic Savio Club has over 80 registered members who gather every Tuesday and Thursday in the church hall for after school activities. Fr. George's presence as a volunteer is much appreciated. -- The Salesian Cooperators meet once monthly at the Salesian Residence under the capable leadership of their council members: Michel Jobin, Mary Fay, Hazel Philadelphia and Fr. George. -- The bi-annual *Magnificat* breakfast for October welcomed over 350 women guests. Prayer, song, and joviality reigned. Katerina Mazi delivered a very powerful witness-talk.

The 4th annual Salesian Fund-raising dinner dance welcomed close to 250 guests for a fun-filled evening on Oct. 28 in St. Benedict's church hall. It proved to be a wonderful occasion for the gathering of the Salesian Family (sisters, brothers, priests, Cooperators, past-pupils and friends of Don Bosco). The proceeds of this event will be used for a poor mission in Haiti.

SURREY, BC. The fall colors, especially the reds of our maple trees surrounding the Don Bosco Youth Center, here in Surrey, have ushered in the month of October with a beautiful display of the autumn season. -- Bro. Steve participated on Oct. 1 in the *Surrey-Delta Pro-Life Chain* where our parishioners by their presence stood in silent solidarity, witnessing to the sanctity and protection of all human life.

Recently Fr. Mario Villaraza spoke at all the Sunday Masses on our Vision – Mission statement, which reads as follows:

"We, the Parish of Our Lady of Good Counsel, are a community of diverse groups and cultures, marked by respect and love for all cultures and by a special option for the poor and the young. We are a community empowered by the Holy Spirit, guided by the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. John Bosco and striving to be faithful to God and to serve the Lord Jesus. We are a community of families united among ourselves and with one another by the practice of our Catholic faith and caring for people of all races and beliefs. We are a community witnessing to all. We are a community journeying together towards the fullness of life in Christ Jesus. To achieve this vision, we commit ourselves to be welcoming and respectful at all times, to be faithful to the teaching of the Catholic Church, to seek conversion and nourishment in the Word

and the Sacraments as priests and religious, to be faithful to our priestly and religious vocation; as parish leaders, workers and members of mandate organizations, to be active collaborators in Saint John Bosco's mission as young people, to take active roles in the parish and community."

Fr. Mario read a letter which he wrote, and it was given to all parishioners, young and old, explaining its contents. If they are in agreement with the Vision-Mission Statement, they were asked to sign the letter and return it with their Sunday envelope or just drop it in the collection basket over the next month. In turn, these signed slips will be burnt symbolically and mixed in with the Lenten ashes to be placed with the Sign of the Cross on their forehead as signs of their commitment to this parish endeavour. Developing plans with the more than 55 parish organizations are being implemented as to how to put words from paper into practical parish action and commitment.

Our community had its home-cooked Thanksgiving meal, plus the pumpkin pie, prepared and delivered by our Portuguese cook, Agostinha. On Thanksgiving Day we had three morning Masses for our parishioners, with gratitude for the various choirs that helped to make this occasion special. That afternoon and evening the community was invited out for two different meals: one Chinese and the other Iranian. Quite a different Thanksgiving mixture of tastes and cultures. -- The Salesian Cooperators met in mid-October in the Mary Help of Christians Hall with their monitor, Bro. Jerry. Their special guest for that monthly meeting was their pastor, Fr. Mario. Since Mrs. Carla Comin will be representing the English speaking region at the World Congress in Rome, Nov. 9-12, upon returning, Mrs. Comin will share her congress experience.

Oct. 14 and 15. was the annual Knights of Columbus Flea Market held in our Don Bosco Youth Center. The youth leaders, under the direction of Bro. Steve, spoke after all the Masses inviting the youth and young adults to participate in joining the Youth Choir, Movie Night, and to sign up as Lectors or Commentators for their Saturday evening Mass. On Oct. 16, Fr. Jan along with the Polish Community had a Pope John Paul II commemorative display and evening Mass commemorating his papal election. -- Bro. Jerry has initiated the series of workshops for our adult commentators/lectors, and all the beginners who would like to join in this apostolate. Some emerging ideas are that of bible study spiritual circles at the various homes of these participants, plus introducing our senior Knights of the Altar to be active in proclaiming the Psalm and Prayers of the Faithful on Saturday evening and Sundays, as a follow up to their gift of service. It is another way of becoming involved after they have outgrown serving.

Mid-morning of the 19th O.L.G.C. School students presented the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary in a dim lit auditorium that created an atmospheric setting. Each bead had a reflection given while different students from the various grades recited the prayers as vigil lights were lit forming a living rosary. Bro. Steve gave a wonderful summary afterwards: a very practical reflection and easy way for the children to understand and remember these decades. He explained the mysteries this way "B-MPTI" (Be-EMPTY) standing for Baptism in the Jordan; Marriage at Cana; Proclamation of the Gospel; Transfiguration, and Institution of the Eucharist (we empty ourselves to receive the Lord). Most of the Salesian Community were present as well as invited parents and guests. It was truly a worthwhile and prayerful time spent with the children.

On Oct. 19 Fr. Peter Zago, SDB, arrived from the Don Bosco Youth Center in Quetta, Pakistan, to speak on Mission Sunday at our neighbouring parish of the Good Shepherd in White Rock, on behalf of the special needs of the Afghani refugees. This Pakistan facility has taken under its wing not only the education of these refugees, but the distribution of food especially to Afghani children in Don Bosco Sch. (206 children), Millat Middle Sch. (308 children), Al- Barooni Sch. (250 children), and the Dannish Middle Schools (273 children). They also have a Don Bosco Clinic that serves both Christian and Afghani Muslim patients. An average of 40-45 patients daily visit the clinic. Fr. Peter was in time to join us for supper, and

also brought with him via Rome, and the Istituto Salesiano S. Callisto, personal letters for each of us, from the former provincial (Fr. Tadeusz) of the Krakow Polish Province.

Our community outing day led us to Fort-Langley, one of Canada's national historic sites. We spent close to two hours viewing how the Hudson Bay Company built this fort on the mighty Fraser River to trade with aboriginal peoples. It is a remarkable example of an original fur trading post. There were interactive demonstrations and displays. Some of the very interesting artefacts were the old maps with the names of the various aboriginal tribes and to see how Canada and the USA were divided then.

The 30th was our weekly day of recollection held at the Korean Parish of St. Andrew Kim. Fr. Maddichetty Micheel, SDB, from India, who is presently on a sabbatical, residing at St. Nicholas Parish in North Vancouver, gave us a reflective talk, heard confessions, and was main celebrant at our community Mass. Truly October has been a busy and active month in the ministry.

INTERVIEW: WITH MAMA MARGARET

This interview is evidently fictitious. However those who are acquainted with the life of Don Bosco will realise that the answers are not fiction. The questions are the fruit of my imagination, not the answers! Some of the content has been drawn from Fr. Arthur Lenti's article, "Margaret Occhiena Bosco (1788-1856), Don Bosco's Mother, Educator and Vocational Support" (Journal of Salesian Studies -- Fall 2005). R.T.

What can you tell us about your family?

I was born on April 1, 1788, in Capriglio, in Piedmont, not far from Turin, the daughter of Melchior Occhiena and Domenica Bosone. I was the third of five children. My parents were well-off peasants. Good Christians, they taught us to respect the law of God.

Your name, your life is linked to that of Bosco. For the benefit of our readers, can you explain to us in what way?

I was married to Francesco Bosco in 1812 at 24. He had lost his 1st wife Margaret Cagliero in 1811, leaving him with a 3-year-old child Antonio. They also had had a girl, Teresa Maria, who had lived for only 2 days.

From my marriage with Francesco were born Giuseppe in 1813 and Giovanni on August 16, 1815, both of them at the Biglione farm, a little uphill from the little house close to the Becchi hamlet which Francesco bought 3 months before he died and where I would move with Francesco's mother, Margaret Zucca, and the children soon after his death. I am speaking of the *Little House of Becchi*.

I have read in a biography of Don Bosco that on a certain morning in August 1860, you appeared to your son and told him: "I am waiting for you in heaven, because you and I are inseparable."

Yes, that is true. And that says much of my relationship with Bosco: Francesco, the whole Bosco family, especially Giovanni.

So the death of Francesco, your husband, left you a widow at 29 years old. With 3 young boys at home, how did you manage?

The death of Francesco was a real tragedy. He was 33 when he died and I was 29, with hardly any resources. But I had been taught to trust in God's providence and that was the time to

be strong. I preferred to remain a widow. Oh! The occasions to contract a new marriage were there -- but I preferred to raise my children that way. I knew God would provide. We were very, very poor. That great famine affected the whole countryside of Piedmont. I hardly know how, but somehow, we managed to survive. Each one did his share. Work was important also for the children. At Francesco's death, they were 9, 4 and 2 years old, Giovanni being the youngest.

Would you tell us a couple of things about how Giovanni was in his youth and as a young man?

I loved the children equally well and tried to be a good mother and to be just toward each one, even, especially a few years later, toward Antonio who showed himself rebellious and disrespectful. He was a disturbed youngster and I accepted him as my own child. Giuseppe was mild-mannered, patient and a follower. Giovanni was lively, intelligent and imaginative, and a leader among his companions. He was a devout boy and had a great desire to learn. All 3 were so very different. As the years passed, Antonio became more difficult to handle, and it caused me very much pain to have to send Giovanni away to live with the Moglias on their farm so he would be spared Antonio's intimidation and fits of anger. Those were 2 long years away from home.

When he was about 9 years old, he had a dream. When he told us about it at table the next morning, somehow I knew that it was a sign from heaven and that it would guide his whole life. I felt it was something important.

What were your feelings when your son decided to go to the seminary to become a priest?

It was always my hope that he would go on with his studies; he wanted so much to learn! In my heart, I was praying that he become a priest. When he chose his way, let us say rather when he chose God's way, a mother could not have been happier. I told him not to worry about me; God would provide. I supported and encouraged him. The day he took on the priestly habit, I told him: "Giovanni, do not dishonour this habit. I would rather have a poor farmer for a son than a priest who neglects his duties." And the evening of his ordination in June 1841, I advised him: "You are a priest now and you celebrate Mass... Remember that to begin to say Mass is to begin to suffer. From now on, you must think only of saving souls, and you must not worry about me."

How does it feel to be the mother of a great saint recognised by the Church?

Oh! That was not my doing. God makes saints; we do not even make ourselves saints. However I did strive to be a good mother to my children. I can say that their religious upbringing was my constant care. I taught them catechism and how to say the Rosary and their prayers morning and night, brought them to church with me, prepared them for the sacraments. I tried to show them the sense of God's presence. Trust, honesty integrity, love of hard work, fidelity to duty, sensibility to other people's needs Christian joy and hope. You know that what we teach children in their youth is very important for their whole life. I was so happy the way Giovanni responded.

Within the Salesian family -and outside too- you are known as "Mamma Margaret." How did that come about?

You know that Don Giovanni got very sick sometime in the first years of his priesthood. In fact he came home to Becchi for some months and I took good care of him. When he got well enough, he returned to his boys in Valdocco and I went with him, knowing he would still have to be looked after for some time. Finally I decided to stay with him. I could not leave him alone; there was so much to do. He was a good father to his boys; I felt I could be a mother to them. For the last 10 years of my life, I stayed by his side, helping out with all kinds of little chores in that

poor Pinardi shed. After a while, everybody called me "Mamma Margherita." Oh, my little orphans, how I loved them! As my own!

So you spent 10 years at Don Bosco's Oratory in Turin. What was the atmosphere like? Didn't you miss the quietness and the country life which you were accustomed to at the Becchi?

Oh! It was not at all an easy life. A few times, I was on the point of going back to my "piccola casa" at Becchi and be with my own grandchildren; I had many by then. But how could I leave Giovanni alone? Well, he was not exactly alone. He had priests helping him occasionally; some ladies came to help also. Among them, my older sister Marianna and Michael Rua's mother.

It was really a family. I think that what Giovanni had not had as a boy -- a father's love -- he tried now to give to those boys, many of whom had no family, roaming the streets of Turin and exposed to all kinds of abuse.

And I was so happy to see that what I had taught Giovanni as a boy, he now passed on to his poor boys. He told them stories, took them for walks in the countryside (even to Becchi), would show them the heavens at night, telling them about the greatness and the goodness of God, told them about the beauty of virtue and the ugliness of sin. I seemed to hear again the things I had told him myself when he was a boy. Yes, it was a happy family. When a boy died -and it happened quite often- I felt I had lost one of my own children.

Would you have a message for Don Bosco's family? It has grown so much since your days at the Oratory.

I think I'll repeat my last words to Giovanni on Nov. 25, 1856: "God knows how much I have loved you my whole life long. I hope I can love you even more in heaven. Tell my dear boys that I worked for them and loved them as a mother." And now, in a way, I would like to be that mother also for the Salesian Family; they continue my son's work.

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JOYEUX ANNIVERSAIRE DE NAISSANCE! HAPPY BIRHDAY!

Jerry Harasym: Nov. 12 Joseph Occhio: Nov 17 Luciano Cortopassi: Nov. 28 svp informer sdbsem@interlinx.qc.ca

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