

SALESIANI 2015







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Dear Friends,

It is with great joy that I present to you the magazine SALESIANS 2015, which corresponds to the third year of preparation to the Bicentenary of Don Bosco's birth.

The first year of preparation was dedicated to Don Bosco's history, the second to his pedagogy and this third one to his spirituality - a spirituality that transcends time and space, and comes to us as a gift and a proposal of happiness. We now bring to a close the preparation and deepening of these three important and inseparable elements of Don Bosco's life.

In the magazine you will find concrete expressions of the spirituality Don Bosco left as a legacy to his Salesian Family. There are specific ways of relating to God, to others, to the social environment and to nature, always under the impulse of the Holy Spirit. This is why it is called spirituality. These expressions are like the colours which, together with the form, create a work of art, a face, a personality with a proper identity. The same elements of holiness lived by other saints, have been arranged by Don Bosco in a very special way, giving birth to the Salesian spirituality of Don Bosco.

The central element of this spirituality is pastoral charity, around which all other elements revolve: the grace of unity as one sole movement of charity towards God and neighbour; prayer motivated by the glory of God and the salvation of souls, done in a simple, youthful, popular, cheerful way and linked to one's style of life; youthful and popular mission, as a place of encounter with God; ordinary life lived with optimism, joy and hope; educative goodness which opens up the doors of the heart to God and neighbor; constant work and joyful temperance; love for the Pope and for the Church and filial trust in Mary.

The articles you will read are but a small sample of the rich human and spiritual patrimony bequeathed as a legacy by Don Bosco to a vast movement of persons who want to do good to the young, especially those most in need. You are cordially invited to participate and to construct for them and with them a better future.

**Cordially,
Fr Filiberto González Plasencia, sdb**





DON BOSCO... a Saint more modern than ever!

200 years have passed since the birth of that little boy, born to a peasant family, who would later be known as our Don Bosco. His understanding of education, his spirituality and his human adventure continue to fascinate many people, among whom are the members of the Salesian family, and those who in the Church and in civil society get to hear about him.

It was Pope Paul VI himself who, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Don Bosco's birth, said that "in order to give a Father and a Teacher to the working and studious youth of new times, aiming at the uplifting of popular classes, in the mysterious designs of his Providence, God chooses a peasant's son, born to a very humble family who – if we look at things in a superficial way – did not certainly have many prospects in life. He gives him a most virtuous mother, endows him with a strong intelligence, an invincible will, and the physical stoutness typical of his people. He enriches him with his gifts: the gift of piety, of intelligence, the desire to learn, an inborn love for his peers, an apostolic zeal, strength in adversities and trials. Then, through difficult paths He leads him to the Priesthood, giving him a passion for souls, in particular for the souls of the youth. 'Da mihi animas, cetera tolle' -Give me souls, take away the rest- (Blessing of the Holy Father on the 150th anniversary of St. John Bosco's birth, 30th June 1965).

This is the person of Don Bosco whom we celebrate this year 2015 - the Bicentenary of his birth. This magazine that now reaches its readers, was supposed to be presented on the occasion of the Bicentenary, during which we deepened the historical knowledge of Don Bosco, his pedagogy and his spirituality. In a short while, another publication will follow, aiming at being a modest exposition of what we lived during this Salesian jubilee.

And this because we, who have experienced this year, revealed that despite the 200 years since his birth, Don Bosco continues to be a timeless priest and educator, "atemporal", always modern, "more modern than ever!" This because he encountered in the youth the essence of his dream, of his life and of his work. He was capable of reading the signs of the times in which he lived, and in particular the message of God to the poorest, to those we today would call, with Pope Francis' words: the "discarded".

He, who for the Universal Church today is the Father and Teacher of Youth, always aimed at reaching the heart of the young, trying to help them find their place in the world and drawing their hearts close to God. Because the young were the reason for his anxieties, his worries and all his thoughts, the young people today, all over the world, feel that Don Bosco belongs to them. His love for his youngsters was full of concrete and timely gestures. He was concerned with their lives, the life of each and everyone of them, and he had totally devoted himself for their spiritual and material good, with all his strength, "to the last breath".

We know well that for Don Bosco, this service to the young was his generous and complete response to God's call.

Today we are many, consecrated persons and laypersons, who are called to re-incarnate Don Bosco, transmitting his spirit, called to educate according to his own heart. And it is for this reason that, with faith and hope, we dare say that Don Bosco is still alive, and many of us, Don Bosco's friends, commit ourselves to keep alive the historical mission he entrusted to us.

With all my heart I wish that this man of God, this saint in the Church, who even today inspires in us and in the young, that love for Jesus and Mary Help of Christians, continue to sustain us in the educative work he had lived.

**With very cordial greetings,
Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, sdb
Rector Major**





Dynamic

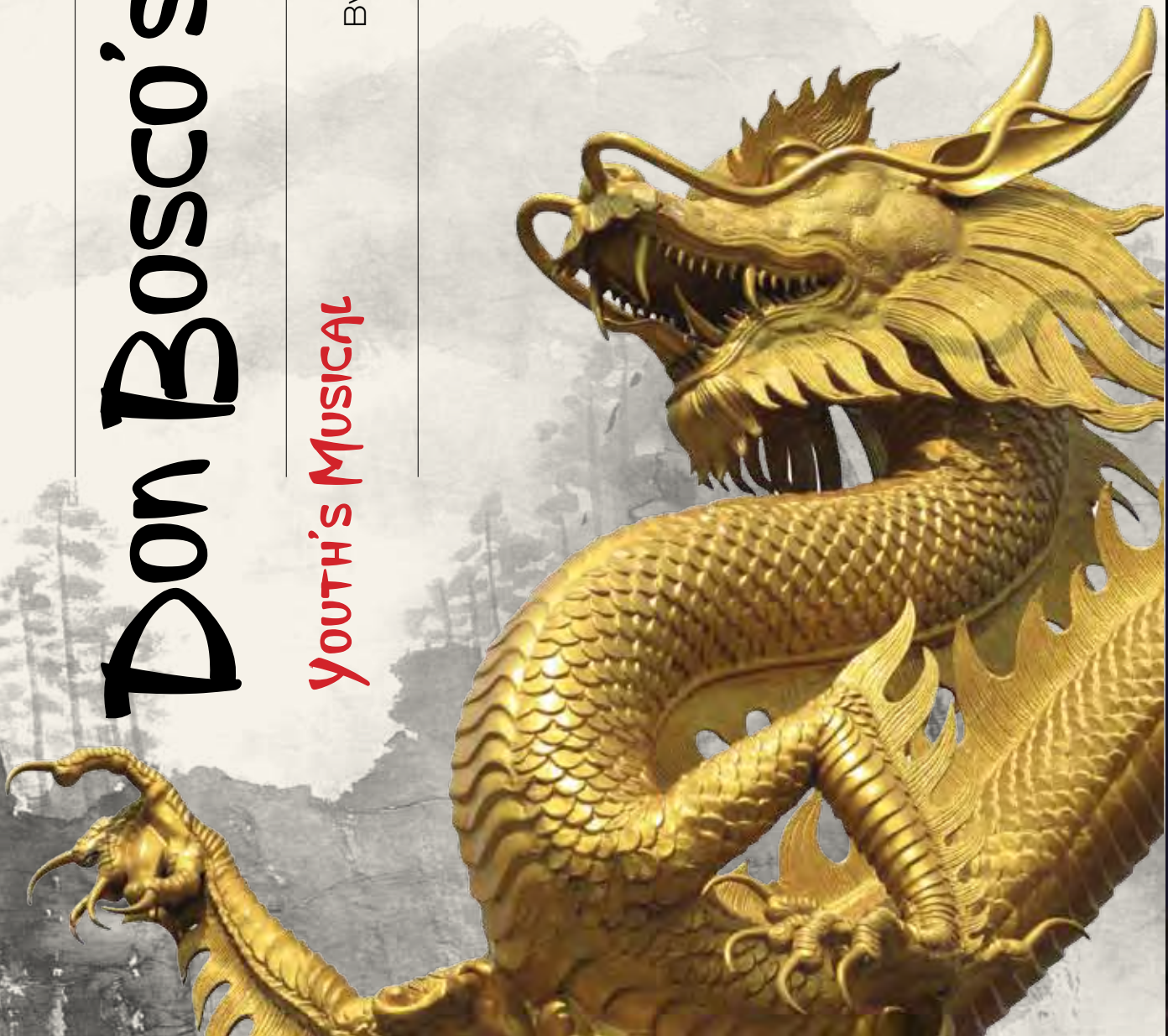
spirituality



Don Bosco's HERITAGE

YOUTH'S MUSICAL

By China Province





THROUGH THIS MUSICAL,
THE WORD OF GOD HAS TOUCHED MANY HEARTS.



THE BOND OF FRIENDSHIP
THAT DEVELOPED WITHIN
THE GROUP IS A GREAT
TREASURE BROUGHT ABOUT
BY GOD'S GRACE.





“Rosary Love II” is an original screenplay, self-directed and performed by the youth of Vineyard Youth Theatre of St Anthony's Church. This is an extension of a previous musical, Rosary Love I, in 2011. The musical's title reminds us that the love of God is something like the beads of the rosary and its chain. This is a story of a terminal cancer patient's battle between good and evil. She lives her life by faith, tough though it may be. And her living example influence on others.

The youth in this group were multi-tasking. They self-funded the whole musical by organising fund-raising activities. They also needed to help with booklet production, purchasing beads for rosaries, and rosary-making for fund-raising (they sold rosary beads in different parishes), logistics arrangement and making backdrop and props. Young Salesian John Baptist Lou, who was in the group before he entered the Salesian House of Studies, wrote the lyrics for the musical and gave the actors spiritual input. This musical was successfully performed in the Sheung Wan Civic Centre and touched hundreds of souls with its music, songs, dialogues, drama and the Word of God. The participants' life was changed for the better after this meaningful evangelising musical.

Ho Man Ho, the vice-director and actor, shared his view: “This musical has been my dream since 2007. I think that those who stood with me on the stage were shining. During the preparation and organizational process, we met obstacles one after another. It seemed that my presence was not important. At that moment, I had put “I” to be too significant. One spiritual sharing caused me to reflect on the reason of producing this musical and my relationship with God. There was one dialogue in the original script, “If God calls one person, nothing can hinder. At the same time, if a person responds to God's call, nothing can hinder too. As God called me to participate in this musical production, I had to try my best to respond to his call.”

Kwok Ming Ho, the main actor of the musical said, “In this troupe, all of us were multi-tasking. Being an actor, I also needed to take up the booklet production, making rosaries for fund-raising purpose,



logistics arrangement, backdrop and pops production, etc. The production process was tough. I had to say the whole process was not systematic in the beginning but gradually got more organized. These experiences have definitely trained me to be flexible, fast-responding with better time management skill. Despite the difficulties, we prayed continuously during the whole process, so that we could be more passionate in our performance, having stronger conviction and positive attitude to solve problems. In my spiritual life, I learnt that I should rely more on Holy Spirit in all things as all of us have limitations”.

FONG CHUN HO was a primary five student, newly-baptised. He said, “It was very challenging to be responsible for different roles in the musical eg. angel, devil, gangster. I was still very fresh spiritually. Now, I find that I learnt a lot about my faith from the elder brothers and sisters in the group such as taking care of the younger members, more willing to help others and pray more.

LEE CHEUK LUNG, who had a supporting role in the musical said: “As I was not one of the main performers, I was free to work on other non-acting duties. All the expenses were covered by us and we didn’t want to waste money on unnecessary things. Besides, we came together to make the rosary beads and pray the rosary at the same time. This really helped our sense of belonging to the group. The musical was about our sense of loss, pain and suffering, life and death, which are common but important themes in our life. This musical helped me to think more of life and death in my own life”.

The pianist, **TSANG LONG TING** said: “I joined this group when I was very young and only came occasionally. Someone knew that I played the piano and asked me to join the musical production. I have to say the pressure was much. If there was any mistake, everyone would know as this was a live music

performance. What I could do was to try my best to overcome the pressure, trusting that God would give me grace to finish the task, since what we did was for the glory of God”.

NG CHAU YIN, the main actress, said: “I love this group. We experienced so much together and we developed deep relationships within the group. This relationship would not change even though some of us were busy with our work or studies. I treasure greatly this relationship. Besides, I have learnt that with God’s grace and trusting in Him, I can overcome difficulties and solve problems”.

CHEUNG KING YIP, the dance director, who is a Protestant, recalled, “I really thought that God looked after this group. During the second show, there was an incident where the music player was suddenly out of order. I was the leader of the group and most familiar with the dance arrangement, but my mind went blank at the time.

Then, one of the dancers began clapping according to the beat and initiated the dance performance. After a while, the musician worked back in. At that moment, I really saw God present in the midst of the musical, taking care not only of our performance but also of the group. God loves us first and thus we see these beautiful fruits”. ■



AUSTRIA



by Leo Dhanraj



A Pentecost of cheerfulness

«Be cheerful! Let your cheerfulness be genuine,
welling up from a conscience free from sin».

DON BOSCO



Young people from all the Salesian presences in Austria came to Unterwaltersdorf (Vienna) to celebrate 100 years of Salesian presence... and this soon became a unique opportunity to celebrate the Bicentenary of Don Bosco's birth. About 220 youngsters coming from our youth centres, parishes, oratories, schools and pensions for students and workers participated in this celebration. A day 'twice blessed', to the joy of all Austrian Salesians and the youth present. The Youth Ministry Team organized the entire event: meeting, being together, playing, working, getting to know each other, praying for one another. Fr. Herbert and his team coordinated the Pfingst – i.e. Pentecost – event. They were helped by Fr. Rudolph Osanger sdb, and by Fr. Petrus Obermüller sdb, as well as by other Salesians and numerous youths. This event of particular joy

lasted two days. Two days entirely devoted to activities such as sports, football, colouring the wonderful Logo of the Pfingst event, Mehendi activities, music, dancing and singing, a live concert, moments of sharing, group activity, prayer, spiritual activities, and the exciting night around the fire. A football tournament was also organized among the various teams coming from all the Salesian presences in Austria.

At the end of the second day, Fr. Rudolf Osanger delivered awards to the winners of the various sports and games saying. "It's been a real festival of the young, and particularly for the young". With Don Bosco's blessing, after his example and his words, we served the Lord in saintly cheerfulness. And we saw this cheerfulness in the face of each of the participants. ■





By Bernard P. Nolasco

Salesian Spirituality

IN SUMMER OUTDOOR CAMPS

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SALESIANS in the world

Summer outdoor camps were one of the many means St John Bosco used in order to help young people spend their time wisely and fruitfully, especially during their vacation months. Summer youth camps, in the mind of Don Bosco, must cater to the holistic formation of the youth. While the youth enjoy the fun of outdoor activities a youth camp can offer, they must also find themselves being given the opportunity to develop their God-given talents and capabilities for the common good. Since the time of Don Bosco until now, Salesian youth camps continue to offer to the young the chance to be empowered in realizing that they can already rise to the challenges that life offers them.

In keeping with this formative tradition, the Salesians of Don Bosco in the Philippine-North Province (FIN) continue to organize summer camps in all their respective settings (schools, parishes, oratories) that are attended by young people who elicit joy and optimism in their being 'bosconians'. With the help of their youth leaders, the Salesians develop modules that can help young people appreciate their being young, leading their youthful energies to produce positive results while at the same time helping them to prepare for a very meaningful and responsible adult Christian life.



While preparing for the 2015 Bicentennial Celebration of St John Bosco's birth, the FIN Province decided that instead of the usual summer camps per Salesian



setting, a province-level summer camp be organised in the summer of 2014.

When this camp was undergoing its initial conceptualisation and planning, Fr. Gaudencio 'GC' Carandang, the head of the Commission for Youth Ministry (CYM), was inspired to take Fr Armand Robleza's CODE OF CHAMPIONS as the core module of this camp. Following the great example of St. John Bosco, the champion of youth, this camping aimed at letting every Bosconian youth be inspired by the father, teacher, and friend of youth as they hope to be champions for people they encounter in their daily lives, especially to their fellow youth.

CHAMPOREE, (the name of this camp, combining the words Champion and Jamboree) was able to offer all four hundred campers a variety of input and interactive sessions that allowed them to be champions for each other. The camp's teams were named after blessed youths of the Church (Savio, Tarcisius, Namuncura, Vicuna, Calungsod, Gorretti, Kesy and Luwanga) and were composed of members from the different Salesian settings. There were no competitions among the different teams. The objective of all the team activities was not to fight against each other to see which team was best but to inspire each other and be champions for each one. There were moments for

guided personal and group reflection, evaluation and sharing, so that every input and activity was properly assimilated and integrated in one's real life situation. Bosconian leaders from DBTI Tarlac, DBA Pampanga, DBTC Mandaluyong, DBC Canlubang, Caritas DB School Sta. Rosa, Savio Parish, San Ildefonso Parish, MHC Mayapa Parish, SJB Parish Sta. Rosa, DB Batulao, DB Calauan were able to enjoy each other's company for four days: praying, learning, eating, singing, dancing, playing, resting, and making friends among themselves. They spent four days decoding the Code of Champions under all weather conditions, amidst all the challenging activities that required one's total cooperation and dedication. In all the camp's activities, the campers tried their very best to be the champion they can be: Cultivating character, Having a heart, Aiming for a mission, Maintaining a balance, Prioritizing the Spirit, and Staying on the course.

CHAMPOREE began on 1st May and ended on 4th May, two days before the feast of St Dominic Savio (May 6), the champion of every Bosconian. As the campers were challenged to share with others the good things they learnt from this four-day camp, they believe that they have the example of this fifteen-year-old saint to inspire them to live the code of the champions as BOSCONIAN CHAMPS. ■



Don Bosco on Wheels



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THE DON BOSCO ON WHEELS MOVEMENT LIVES
THE SALESIAN PREVENTIVE SYSTEM,
HELPING THE LESS FORTUNATE YOUTH TO RECLAIM
THE JOY AND HOPE IN LIFE.

By Hugo Orozco





“

After the accident I was dead to life, my friends were tired of visiting me, my family was tired of doing everything for me... I lay in bed, unable to move... I was angry with life, with God, with myself... I felt I was dead even though I was still living... until that day when a priest visited me and asked me why I was lying there if I was not sick... The truth is that I was angry within, but Don Bosco came into my life on wheels, and raised me up, restored me to life, and encouraged me to be independent...”



The experience of having an accident is always something that marks the lives of those who suffer and those who survive. More so when there are irreversible consequences, such as injury to the spinal cord. Accompaniment, education and the right support for people who cannot walk or stand up on their own accord, on occasions is neither adequate nor appropriate. The situation is exacerbated when financial or educational support is inadequate. Thus it is that young people between 10 and 30 years of age can lie “hidden”, “locked up” in their own home without knowing other alternatives to the disability they suffer.

Sahuayo is a medium-sized city in the State of Michoacán in Mexico. For more than 50 years the Salesians of Don Bosco have had a presence with a strong social and educative concern for the people. Since the

26th General Chapter, urges us to discover new frontiers for Don Bosco’s charism, Fr Jaime Reyes Retana sdb, a member of the community, began what years later became the *Don Bosco on Wheels Movement* aimed at a very necessary frontier and a novelty in our beloved Mexico.

Over the last 10 years, circumstances led Fr Jaime Reyes to study the issue, be in contact with other social actors and involve more people. Today *Don Bosco on Wheels* has social recognition, a presence in the SYM, more than 800 sympathisers in different cities and a workshop that manufactures wheelchairs for independent living.

The principal mission is to look for children and youth in a situation of dire poverty who have motor disabilities, and invite them to join with others where together we find the means necessary

for development and integration into society. The experience of recovering their lives is immediately visible in their faces. These are young people who have the same desires, need friends, need to feel part of a group, play sport, work, socialise, play, dance... For them to regain an independent living and social encounter also means regaining their sense of life. If the sadness and shock of losing motor skills immerses them in a dark and deep depression that affects their inner existence, then the happiness of finding new options for life, the effort this implies, the struggle, the constancy, affect so much more their optimism, their will to live, the joy of encountering others and the possibility of making "peace with God".

Certainly Don Bosco has inspired us to seek out young people who are not visible, and certainly we

are happy to recover the life of any young person, more so if that person already feels lost. And of course we are convinced that no one is saved alone; we always need others. And it is clear that we believe in responsibility and inclusion of all citizens in daily social life. In *Don Bosco on Wheels* we share the values of a spirituality that has inspired the educational work of Don Bosco and the Salesians: Family Spirit, Fellowship, Charity, Solidarity, Freedom, Responsibility, Work.

The very feeling of closeness in Don Bosco's Preventive System has been part of the movement. Fr Jaime and some young volunteers have learnt how to push wheelchairs not just as an expression of solidarity, but of being close to people, expressing empathy. They go on chairs with them, go for outings, celebrate Mass, play, dance... whatever a young





THE VALUES OF THE SALESIAN SPIRITUALITY IS SHARED
BY THIS GROUP, HAVING A WORKSHOP THAT MAKES
WHEEL CHAIRS FOR THOSE LESS FORTUNATE.



person does. The Holy Week was an opportunity to encounter God for those in *Don Bosco on Wheels* who wanted to take the path of reunion with Him: for many of them the accompaniment, prayers, sharing, experiencing the Holy Week celebrations were an opportunity to renew their faith in life.

Don Bosco on Wheels, like the mustard seed of the Gospel, is still a small thing, but it is beginning to extend branches which offer shade, shelter, serenity and tranquility to many young people. Today, like Don Bosco, it is enough for them to be young to love them in God, see them happy now and in eternity, since we are the eyes of the Good Shepherd who seeks out those who cannot be seen. May the bicentenary of his birth flood us with apostolic passion for all the young people in our cities whom people do not see but who are there just the same... waiting for us. ■





Joyful

spirituality





By Osvaldo Gorzegno Davico/Juan Carlos Quirarte

The Torrid Border

MEXICO-USA

The pastoral and educative offer of the Salesians from MEG and SUO, distributed along the MEXICO-USA border, focuses intentionally on popular areas, marginal areas on the outskirts of the city and strategic areas for human mobility. We offer systematic educational, welfare and evangelising programs. We have 13 youth centres, 6 parishes (one on American territory), a college and a community centre with educational and welfare programs for migrants, deportees, and local people.





THE BORDER IS SEEN AS A SIGN OF HOPE BY THE MEXICANS BUT AS A RISK FOR THE AMERICANS.

Some places for various reasons become channels which concentrate large flows of human migration. One of these is the border between Mexico and the United States, an area stretching 3,200 kilometres from east to west. The area has many border posts, and at global level possibly sees the greatest number of people moving across, legally or illegally, under a particularly sophisticated vigilance strategy by the United States.

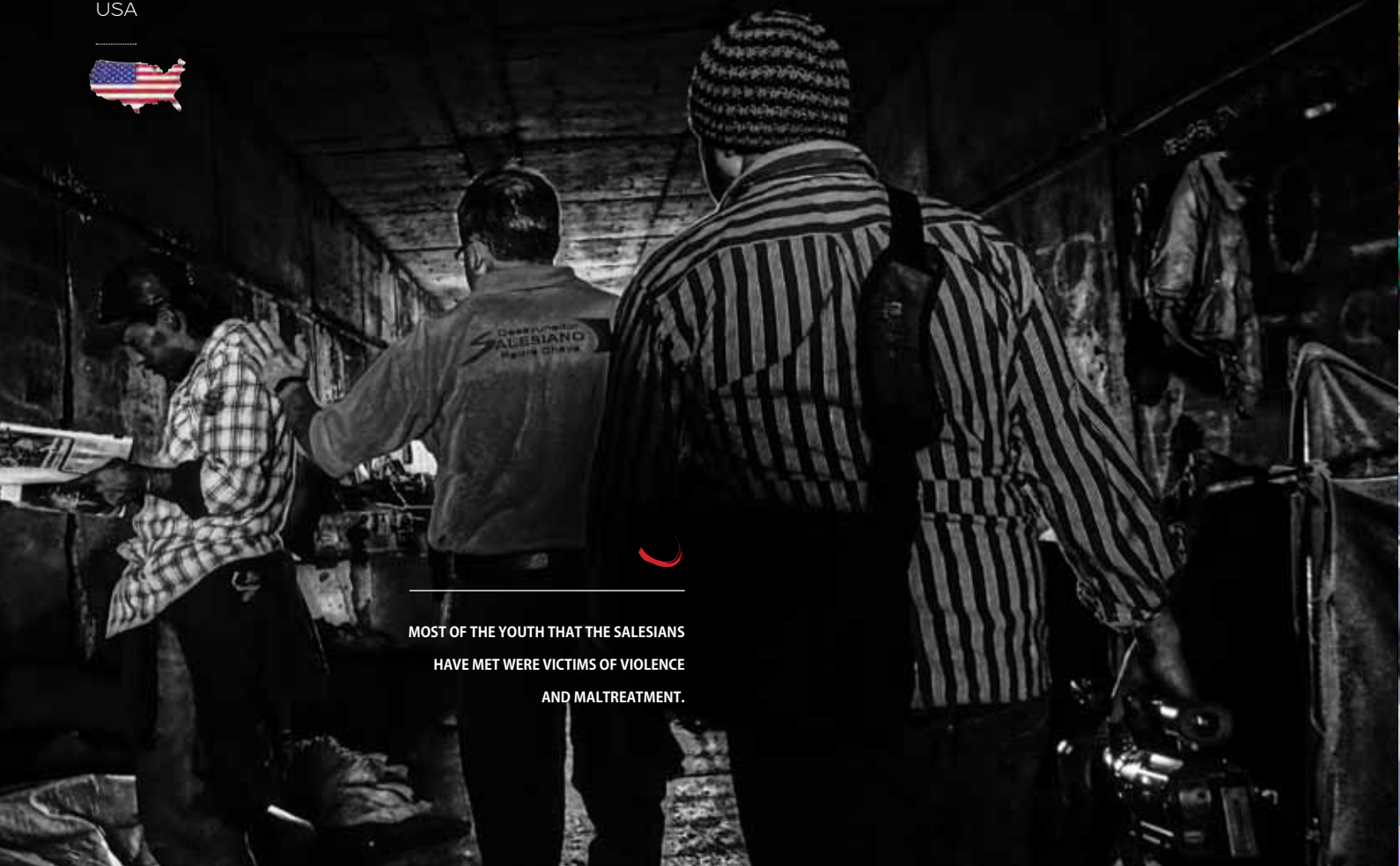
The crossing to or from the United States occurs at 23 locations, eight of which see 94% of the migratory flow going both ways. These posts fall into three categories:

- border cities of a traditional kind and strategically placed: Tijuana-San Diego (west), Ciudad Juárez- El Paso (centre) and Matamoros-Brownsville (east).
- Less important border cities: Mexicali-Calexico, Piedras Negras-Eagle Pass, Nuevo Laredo-Laredo Texas and Nogales Sonora-Nogales Arizona.
- New border crossing: Reynosa-Mc Allen, Ciudad Acuña-Del Río and Sásabe in the Altar desert in Sonora State.

The Salesians from Mexico-Guadalajara (MEG) have seven communities along the frontier (Nuevo Laredo, Piedras Negras, Ciudad Juárez, Nogales, Mexicali and Tijuana) and Salesians from the United States West Province (SUO) have one community in Laredo Texas and various communities in southern California.

Over the last three decades, along the border of both countries, we have seen important transformations in the social dynamics which considerably affect migration processes; there have been strong changes in volume, direction of the flow and, over time, new forms of migration have come into being. In this context we can define four migration flows depending on direction:

1. Migrants who arrive on border cities on return to the country, after working in North America.
2. “Undocumented” Mexicans captured in the United States and returned to the country by “border patrols”.
3. Residents from other parts of the country who are temporarily in the border cities working or looking for work and who are on their way back to the place of origin (coming from the northern border)



MOST OF THE YOUTH THAT THE SALESIANS
HAVE MET WERE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE
AND MALTREATMENT.

4. Inhabitants of other areas of the country who arrive in the border cities in the north intending to work there or cross over to the United States for work purposes (coming from the south).

For the younger generations in fact who are born in a walled-in border context, it is the only reality they know, see and can touch. For young people transiting through the border cities or who hear about them, it has a social image which is the result of the most recent contemporary situations:

- Tough migration policies brought about by the US and its elected representatives to regain a feeling of security, especially after 9/11, 2001.
- The stigma attached to the Mexico-US border as an opportunity for Mexicans but a danger to the United States citizens.
- Any area for illegal traffic in drugs, arms, people and money.

For those thinking of young people today, meaning those born in the second half of the 1980s onwards, border areas between Mexico and the United States are seen and perceived as areas of international tension, exacerbated to a great extent by social and political tendencies in both countries. Areas of suspicion, conflict, flow and, at times, blocking. While border relations have not always been

so troubled, nor might current tensions continue into the future, for today's youth, the Mexico-US demarcation and its emblematic Wall are an uncomfortable topic.

Following Salesian tradition, our offer consists of education programs, and programs of evangelisation and human development. We are a significant presence for children and older youth, with alternatives for use of leisure time, literacy initiatives, opportunities for school recovery and mainstream schooling, cultural expressions, which respect the multicultural origins of border communities.

Faced with a situation of violence and social insecurity which has arisen over recent years, we strive to educate to peace, work for social integration, prevention of addiction, prevention of becoming part of organised crime, offer fraternal presence, full of Christian charity for those who have been victims of violence.

The witness of our religious life is also an important part of our border presence. From this we see the urgent need to encourage encounter with Jesus, recover and deepen faith in its various expressions. This work requires dedication and constant tenacity amidst so many social, economic, pastoral problems, including also the climate.

From the outset of the Salesian presence on the northern Mexico border, we have had the support and pres-



ence of volunteers from a number of communities (EU, Austria, Spain, Italy, Argentina, etc.), with brief visits (summer programs, Christmas, or Holy Week) or from volunteers who stay longer. To all of these young people with such generous hearts go our thanks and gratitude. The two Provinces have had the chance to reflect and exchange views, and we have been able to be more systematic in receiving not only volunteers but also Salesians in formation.

After the Team Visit in Salvador in 2011, the issue of our pastoral and educative proposal on the border was the object of reflection, study and future planning by both provinces, with the possibility of being able to set up an international Salesian community. Our aim is to integrate not only the Society of Don Bosco, but to encourage teamwork too with the Salesian Family and laity. Questions such as New Evangelisation, education, human development, education for peace, family and human rights, are open to cooperation; and as sons of Don Bosco the Dreamer, they have us think optimistically of the social impact, better conditions for life for everyone, especially young people in both countries, allowing us to experience hope in a more fraternal, just and human future, and being part of building up the Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus in the Gospel. ■



A Corridor and 12 Doors

Being an educator at Casa Don Bosco has allowed me to grow professionally, but it has especially allowed me to grow as a person, since every day there are amusing moments and others more demanding, unbelievable experiences, anecdotes of every hue, ultimately experiences of life that no one will be able to erase from memory and that you will remember throughout life.

By Luis Miguel Avilés

My gaze fell only on the long corridor with its 12 rooms, my ears only heard the silence of a warm August morning. My tongue and mouth could not stop twitching from small nerves and the hairs on my body stood on end as the minutes passed. My nose began to capture the subtle odours coming from the walls and my heart sensed that this place was something special, as time would prove.

I was 21 years old, some might think too young to be

working in a Centre for the Protection of Minors, and that was so, but the desire to dedicate myself to Social Education overcame the adversities of age.

I remember that first day as if it were yesterday, and two years, seven months have already passed, two years and seven months where I have become like a three-year-old, and as they say for babies, I became a sponge; I observed, observed and kept observing each



AT THIS TIME, I HAVE LEARNED GRATITUDE,
BEING CONSTRUCTIVE AND THE SENSE OF FAMILY.

of my colleagues, and that helped me to grow much as an educator, since I consider them to be very professional, very qualified, but especially very human.

My time as part of Casa Don Bosco (Don Bosco House) could be summed up in a word, “awe”, since I have been in awe of so many things... from the affectionate, sympathetic and fun way the educators deal with their charges; the good atmosphere that exists between staff and administration; the experiences and events of the youngsters; the involvement of all the staff; since getting to know the Salesians I am not surprised now by such a special style, yet so nice to have in life (*there is no way you can win a game of table tennis against any of them*).

However my experience as an educator at Casa Don Bosco could not be summed up in a word; it would need others such as: gratifying, constructive, formative, familiar... and many more, but I prefer to remain with what is personally most important to me.

Being able to go to work every day and spend time with the kids, with the idea and the hope that one day these moments can appear in the lives of the boys when they have to face the adversity that presents, and to think that something you said one day, or did one day, or that you taught, can help these kids—I believe that is the most gratifying thing that can happen to someone.

Being an educator at Casa Don Bosco has allowed me to grow professionally, but it has especially allowed me to grow as a person, since every day there are amu-

sing moments and others more demanding, unbelievable experiences, anecdotes of every hue, ultimately experiences of life that no one will be able to erase from memory and that you will remember throughout life.

But the truth is that not all has been rosy—during my time at Casa Don Bosco there have been times, as I say, when I have felt good, satisfied with my work, certain of myself... but there have also been agonizing moments when I have had to ask if the profession I have chosen is really suitable, moments when you doubt yourself, moments, and why not say so, when you encounter a very complicated professional and personal dilemma. And it is in these moments when important people appear in your life, and you trust them and they help you take the right decision. In my case these people were some members of my family and some colleagues, and this situation has made me realise that we must be there for the kids so that if they sometimes find themselves faced with a dilemma like mine, we can be someone they can turn to, since we are an important part of their lives as my family and colleagues were for me.

Two years and seven months, and I still look down that corridor with my eyes, hear the same silence, I recall the smell and take in mouthfuls of air thinking of what it meant for me that day. I remember that first day and it continues like that.

The only thing that has changed is me, when I recall the person who came in and look at myself now and who I am. I recognise everything I have learned, and much that lies ahead still to learn. ■



God is my Place

By Manolo Cayo

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SALESIANS *in the world*



I am writing from Córdoba, where I am carrying out the Provincial Visitation at the Postnovitiate House. As I speak with the various Salesian confreres over these days, there is the recent, vivid

memory of Gonzalo Acosta, a young man from Salta, a city in Argentina's north-east, where he shared his prenovitiate years and much of his novitiate with them. He left us in September after a serious and intense period of discernment, but a strong bond remained.. and still continues.

Gonzalo met up with an accident and died on Easter morning 2014. He was just 22 years of age. Many made the trip from Córdoba to Salta, a little more than 800 kilometres, for the final farewell. They expected a tough, difficult time ... but what drew their attention was that, in the midst of such sorrow, a serene cheerfulness reigned, the hope that there is when we put our trust in the Risen Christ.

He was serenaded with guitars at the funeral, many friends spoke of his life, there were anecdotes and enthusiastic testimonies about him; the Requiem was a real celebration of gratitude to God for Gonzalo's life. Gonzalo was once more giving us a true lesson of life from God.

Amongst the memories I am going back to, there was an essay he wrote when he was 14. Amongst other things there he said:

“There is an invitation we all have and for which God has given us countless gifts: it is the call to holiness, something that is possible, yes, and which we must all have as our priority... by banking on the holiness that comes from little things”.

“All my recollections of the Oratory are happy ones: our times together, climbing the nearby hills, our walks along the river, the football competitions, the oratories we would set up in the missions... but none of those memories can be compared with being amongst my friends, and no experience would be worth anything to me had I not shared it with them”.

“One of the key features of the Salesian is service, that selfless service offered with love. A service which is not com-

mon amongst young people. Almost unique... unrivalled, offered to give life to the future. We can all be part of this service. Let us draw up a new future”.

“Mary Help of Christians is my mother; she made it possible for Don Bosco to live his dream and has kindled the call to holiness, the desire for holiness in my heart. If she makes it possible for a boy of 14 to want to be holy, what could then be impossible?”

These words that he said nine years ago were the ones that he lived intensely in all the decisions he took. We know this through the testimony of those who accompanied him on his journey of life. This is why his life was so fruitful despite it being so short... his departure was so sudden, but his heart was ready.

I am reminded of Gonzalo on the day we recall Dominic Savio: a holy youth, someone who discovered that he could already begin to live profoundly. He did not have to wait “until he was mature” to give abundant fruit, because each step he took in life contained its own fullness. He was a saint who met another saintly pastor and educator who placed his trust in him, heeded his deep desire for God and encouraged him to take up that adventure.

Recalling Saint Dominic Savio invites us to at least two things: firstly, convincing ourselves that there are many young people like him, such as Gonzalo, and many others... who want to live life profoundly, be fruitful, give their lives meaning (we should not be caught up in a diabolically pessimistic view of the condition of young people today). Secondly, to heed and take seriously this desire that wells up in so many teenagers and older youth... so we can accompany them from that point onwards! It is so sad to see the educator and pastor who minimises, relativises and disregards what is in a young person's heart by seeing them as “incomplete” (looking at them from an adult-centred point of view!) At the last retreat that Gonzalo made two months ago, he wrote down something which summed up his desire for today and his plans: “*God is my place...*”

It is from such a place that his life will continue to speak to us... just as Dominic's life continues to do so... 157 years later. ■

By Sony Pottenplackal



The Mission of the Group

“Dominic Savio and Don Bosco”

The youth who attend the two Salesian presences in Monrovia – Don Bosco House in the 8th Street and the House of New Matadi – are animating a community initiative of sensitization and preventive education against Ebola epidemic. Education and knowledge are the best arms to defeat this lethal virus.



Liberia is the country most struck by contagion, and Monrovia, its capital city, is the zone where it seems more difficult to contain the epidemic, which in Liberia alone so far claimed more than 1800 lives. The youth have engaged in a fight against Ebola in the streets of Monrovia with the slogan “Each One Reach One”. In a first moment they were trained by health-care workers and physicians of the Health and Social Security Ministry, and by a formation team of the project ‘Response to Ebola’ promoted by the Catholic Church and guided by Dr. Timothy Flanigan, specialised in infectious diseases at Brown University in Rhode Island, USA, and who is also a permanent deacon. From an operational point of view, these youth – who number 105 boys and girls, divided into two teams – go from one community to another, in the city streets and in shantytowns, and instruct people on how to avoid infection and protect themselves and their families. In this way, young people assume a role of leaders and forerunners in the fight against fear and ignorance, to communicate hope and a positive attitude. Thus, in a moment of crisis and suffering for the whole country, they express their sense of

solidarity and patriotism. So far it is calculated that, in the last four weeks, over 5000 people have been reached with a work of sanitary education. The two youth teams are animated and accompanied by Fr. Daniel Libby, coordinator of the young in the Don Bosco House of the 8th Street, and by Fr. Raphael Aeroboam, who is in charge of the youth at the Salesian House in New Matadi. Activities are supported by the Salesians and the generosity of many people and faithful of St. Joseph’s parish, in Capitol Hill quarter. “My friends and relatives were very about for me, in this situation. They advised me in all possible ways to return to Nigeria, but I told myself: this is a situation that requires the contribution and help of all, no matter how small this may be. And since God has given me life and a good health, I use them to do good to others”, says Josephat, the inspirer and leader of the first group engaged in checking the virus. The social context in which the youth are called to work is always very difficult, since – despite all information and the precautions adopted – there still are many people who do not believe there is an epidemic, but rather criticize and accuse the government and the



THE VOLUNTEERS, TRAINED BY THE STAFF OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH, WERE ABLE TO RESPOND ADEQUATELY TO THE NEEDS CAUSED BY THE EBOLA VIRUS.

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SALESIANS *in the world*

Ministry of Health of stealing money and thinking only of safeguarding wild animals, monkeys and bats, that are the first carriers of the virus. On the other hand, the government started taking serious measures only after a government officer, Patrick Sawyer, died of Ebola in Nigeria (at the end of July, whereas the first cases in Liberia appeared in March). About 34 persons were healed from Ebola. According to the testimony of many of them, the most important factor that remarkably facilitated their healing was a correct nutrition, together with an adequate treatment from healthcare workers. "This motivated our group to extend our mission directly to people struck by Ebola, – recounts Josephat – since we could not reach out to them personally, we donate food, disinfectants, mineral water (especially to support and motivated health workers), chlorine and chloride, cakes of soap and powder





THE SITUATIONS IN WHICH THE YOUNG VOLUNTEERS FOUND THEMSELVES WERE OFTEN DIFFICULT.

soap, giving our help through the Charity fund of the Archbishop. We purchase all the necessary material and send it to our parish priest who forwards it to the Archbishop and he, in his turn, sends it to the various Ebola isolation centres located in Monrovia. This is an initiative of the Archdiocese in the fight against Ebola". According to the statistics given by the Ministry of Information on 3rd September, the victims of Ebola in Liberia were 1015. "The good news is that two counties in Liberia are presently virus free and the county where the village in which we operated has now reduced the number of Ebola cases", concludes Josephat. "We managed to encounter numerous families during this mission of ours. The Lord is really doing great things. Some of the people we helped were dismissed from hospital a few days ago because they were healed from Ebola, after following the advice we had given them in our home-to-home visits, affirms Josephat. "The situation of the country at this moment is pitiful. There is a need to intensify prayer and initiatives: prayer and work. Prayer without a serious work is dead". Their last journey was not an easy one. Because of some rumours of ill-intentioned

people who might poison the wells, once they arrived in Gwaa, in the county of Bomi, the youngsters of Don Bosco and Dominic Savio were stopped and kept in custody by the local police. They were interrogated, as were also the families they had previously visited. Not even the photos of previous expeditions, shown on their phones, were of any help. The police were convinced of their good intentions only after they obliged them to use first on themselves the material they had brought. "We did it, washing our hands and face with that sanitary material. Then a sincere and long public apology followed. The news that had previously come from Guinea, where some health-care workers had been put to death during one of their home-to-home visits in order to prevent Ebola, had alarmed us... But the Lord really protected and saved us. It was not easy for my group to overcome this trauma, but little by little I tried to make them understand that our goal was to do what we do for the Lord and to save as many lives as possible". ■



« These Salesians are Good! »

By Giuseppe Nguyen





Ecumenism, religious freedom, protection of Christians and of religious minorities in the Middle East... many are the themes at the core of the apostolic trip of Pope Francis to Turkey. But, as usual, the Pope wished to take some time out also for the last ones, those least considered by society, like the minor refugees that are welcomed at the refugee centre of the Salesians in Istanbul.

The Pope's visit to the Salesian presence in Istanbul thus puts under the spotlight a reality that is little known, something the Pope himself calls "a hidden work", but most precious and an evident sign of the universal maternity of the Church. It is therefore interesting to note how much the work of a few, simple people can positively affect the lives of the small refugees.

The encounter between the Pope and some 100 children and teenagers, Christian and Muslim, displaced from Syria, Iraq and the Horn of Africa, took place in the afternoon of 30th November, 2014, in the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Istanbul, and was the last stage of his apostolic trip. An emotional closeness could immedi-

ately be felt between the Pope and the young refugees, and the Holy Father explained to the children that he would have wished to meet many more refugees during his trip, but he could not because of his intense and tight program. The majority of the refugees, mostly ten to eleven years old, attend the school run for them by the Salesians, with English language courses that prepare them to emigrate to USA, Canada and Australia. The Pope, who spent about 30 minutes with them, sat on the steps of the altar, whereas the children were seated in the first rows of the church pews.

"Continue to pray"

The Rector of the school, Fr. Andrés Callejas, greeted the Holy Father in Spanish. Then a little Christian girl from Iraq recounted the "dramatic situation from which she had fled and the poverty in which she lived, not being able to go to school and living in a situation of constant danger". A moving moment was when the children sang to the Pope a song in Spanish, English and Arabic, while Fr. Callejas accompanied them on the guitar. "Dear children – the Pope later said – do not be discour-



aged. Despite the difficulties and obstacles you are now facing, with God's help continue to hope in a better future. The Catholic Church, also through the precious work of the Salesians, is close to you and, besides other aids, offers you the possibility to care for your instruction and formation. Keep always in mind that God does not forget any of his children, and that the smallest and those who suffer most are the ones most close to his fatherly heart". Speaking to the youth, the Holy Father launched another appeal to the international community. "The degrading conditions in which many of the refugees must live are intolerable. This is why we must

do our best to remove the causes of this reality. I launch an appeal for a greater international coordinated effort to solve the conflicts that are steeping your homelands in blood, to fight the causes which push people to leave their homes and to promote favourable conditions for them to remain or return". "As for me, the Pope continued, I will continue to pray with trust in the Lord, asking Him to inspire those who hold posts of responsibility, to promote justice, security and peace without wavering and in a truly concrete way. Through her social and charitable organizations, the Church will stay beside you and will continue to support your cause before the world".



«GOD DOES NOT FORGET ANY OF HIS CHILDREN.

THE LEAST AND THE SUFFERING ARE CLOSEST TO HIS FATHERLY HEART».

POPE FRANCIS



When he returned to the Vatican, in the course of the first general audience, on 3rd December 2014, the Pope, as usual, shared with the faithful his impressions on his trip to Turkey. And going through the most salient moments, Pope Francis touchingly recalled the little refugees he had met in Istanbul and the Salesians who look after them. These are the words of the Pope: “The last meeting — this was beautiful and also painful — was that with a group of young refugees, hosted by the Salesians. It was very important for me to meet with some of them from the war zones in the Middle East, both to express to them my

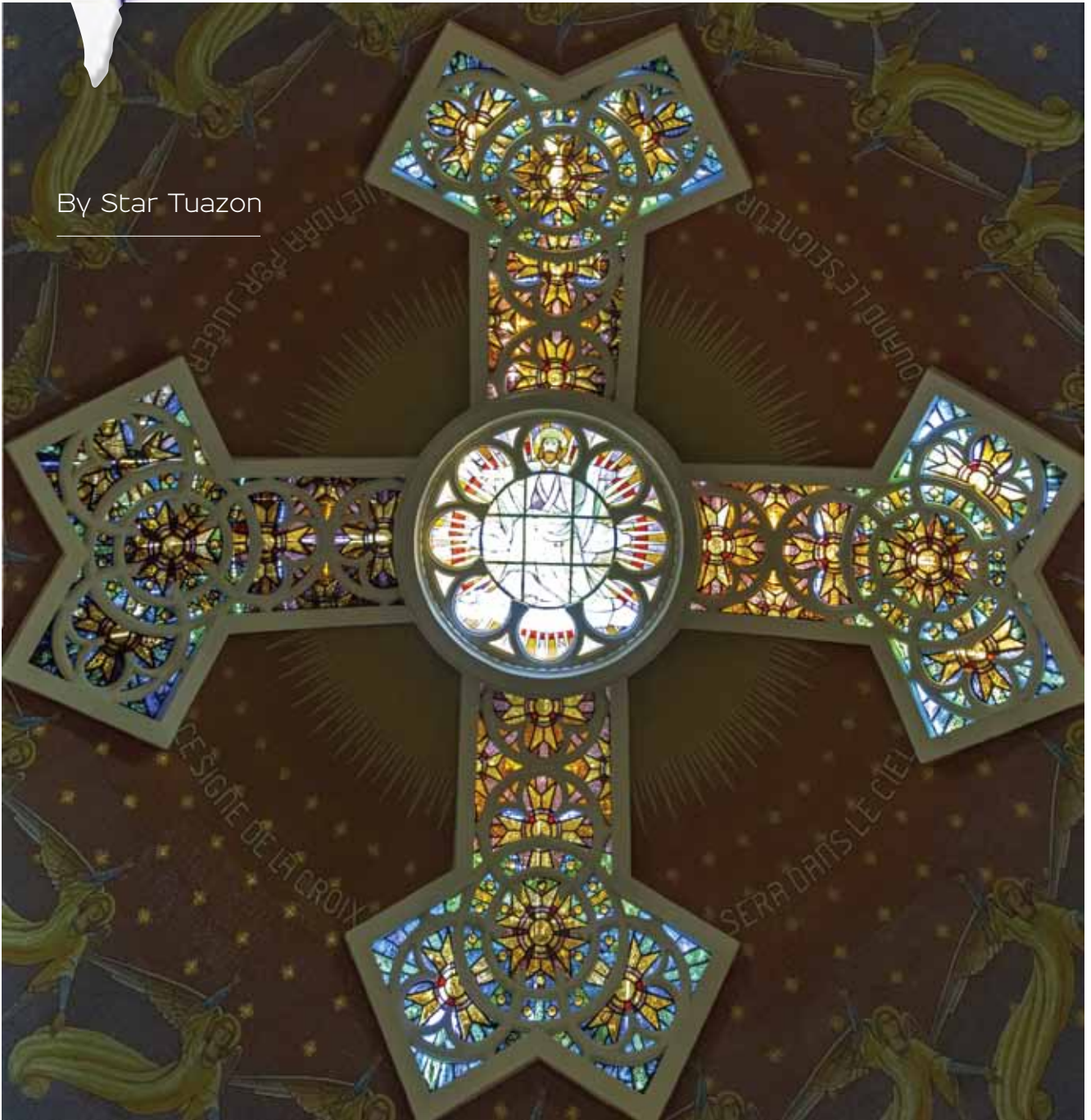
closeness and that of the Church, and to underline the value of acceptance, to which Turkey is also deeply committed. I thank Turkey once again for receiving so many refugees and I thank the Salesians in Istanbul from my heart.

These Salesians are working with the displaced people, they are good! I also met other priests and a German Jesuit and others who work with refugees. It is a beautiful initiative, it is a hidden work. I thank all those people who are working with displaced people. Let us pray for all the displaced people and refugees, that the causes of this painful scourge may be removed”. ■



The spirituality of the Working Migrants

By Star Tuazon





Eight years ago I was on a flight. Destination: Israel. There I knew only one person: my aunt. I felt a mixture of emotions. It was my first trip abroad; a violent wish of independence; fear of the unknown; anxiety about the reports I had seen on TV on the conditions in Israel. Only then did I realize that on board with me there were also four Filipinos, and all these sensations faded in the blink of an eye. We immediately established a friendship that lasts even now, after many years. Being in Israel meant being away from my family. Fortunately there is Skype, but this does not diminish homesickness and the desire to be close to the family. Virtual presence is certainly very beautiful, but it always leaves a hole in the heart that is difficult to fill. The persons I met on that flight shared my same condition, experienced the same fears. Soon I felt they were people I could trust, present in difficult moments, and they have been a shoulder on



which to cry. It is not important whether they come from the North or from the South. Now they are part of the family. But above all I must thank God for the gift of the church. This is the first thing one thinks on Sabbath day: a sanctuary, a safe haven, a place to meet, where to open one's heart, and whisper to God what one is experiencing, things that cannot be said, not even to friends or to most intimate persons. I thank the Lord also for the Filipino communities of Tel Aviv, Jaffa, Rehovot, Netanya, Haifa, Nazareth, Jerusalem and Kiriath Shemona. The community of the "Good Shepherd" in Agron Street, close to the American Consulate, some distance from the place where Isaiah prophesied the birth of the Virgin. Thanks to "St. Laurence" Community of the Salesians in Ratisbonne. I always participated in the Mass of the Salesians on Wednesday and Saturday evenings, moments in which we could leave for about one hour our elderly employers.

Being a Filipino, a great faith flows in my veins. Probably, if it were not for the Filipinos, many churches in the world today would be closed, as once a Salesian

**THE FILIPINO COMMUNITY IS BECOMING MORE NUMEROUS.
THE SONS OF DON BOSCO ENSURE THAT THE MANY IMMIGRANTS
RECEIVE THE NEEDED SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL CARE.**



TO LIVE IN THE LAND OF JESUS IS SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR A FILIPINO.



friend of mine told me. Being a Filipino, one also has the sense of sacrifice. Especially sacrifice faced for the good of one's family. Leaving the children, home and country, for a job you would have never thought to do in your own homeland, such as being a carer, a waiter, a borer or a seaman... A permanent state of unease, solitude, homesickness, discrimination for years on end. This implies flexibility, ability to see the positive aspect in everything, adaptability. And, above all, it means having a great sense of generosity: reaching out to less lucky people, to the victims of the many and constant calamities that occur in our beloved homeland, the churches, the children. Being a Filipino in the Holy Land is something else, something more, something special: the special thing is precisely the Holy Land. Who would have ever

imagined that there would be 40,000 Filipinos in Israel? We are here, we live, we work, we love this land of milk and honey. The land God had promised to Abraham, the land where Jesus walked, worked, suffered, died and rose. The land we first heard of only at catechism classes or at Mass. We are not only lucky, but we are blessed because we live here, we work here with and for these chosen people. Jerusalem. Bethlehem. Galilee and Jericho: somehow Jesus was present here, he trod on these stones, saw these trees, drank from these watercourses. Visiting these places I felt at ease, especially when I organised outings for my friends, excursions to raise funds for projects we dreamt of. And then there are my favourite hiding places, where I go to remain alone for a while, alone with myself: the Holy Sep-





WITH THEIR PRESENCE, THE FILIPINOS STOP THE DECREASE IN THE NUMBER OF CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND.

ulchre, the Dormition Church, St. Peter in Gallicantu. I do not want to forget the colourful feast of St. Cruzan in May, the feast of our beloved St. Lorenzo Ruiz of Manila in September and may be soon also the feast of St. Piero Calungsod. With dances, songs, colours and music and, obviously, lot of Filipino food.

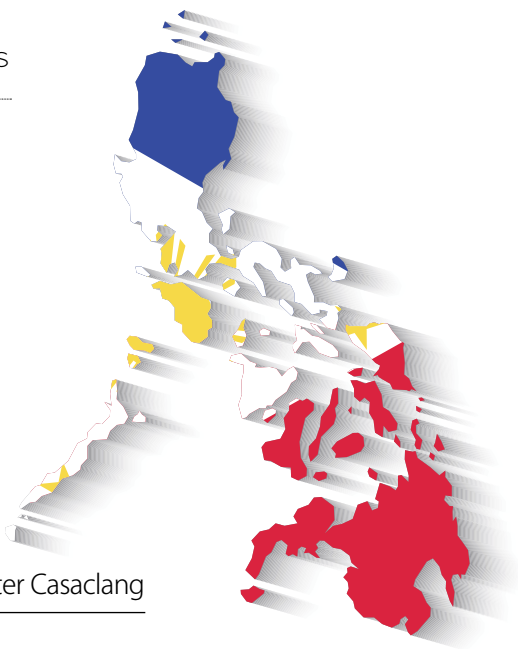
And then, Holy Christmas, with the difference that those who live here, as I do, have the privilege to spend the whole day in Bethlehem.

But, obviously, all is not a bed of roses. There are also persons who do not enjoy so much freedom: in some Jewish families, rosaries, Bibles, holy pictures, scapulars are not allowed. They do not have free time and the possibility to participate in the Sunday Mass, nor to visit Holy places. They are so anxious about the possibility to send money to their families back home, or to find another job in hard times. Our meetings are marked by lot of faith and friendship. But there is also a lot of food. There is no meeting without food. Food that often cannot be prepared in the Jewish houses where we work. *Pancit, puto, adobo, dinuguan*, warm

rice. During the week it is good to think of the moment when we can enjoy our traditional food and to know that we can share it with our Salesian friends.

All of us know that, nowadays, Christian communities in Israel and Palestine are smaller and smaller. What however is not known is that the number of new Christian communities is increasing. Who would have ever thought that the presence of Catholics would have been strengthened by the arrival of so many communities of immigrants as the Filipinos? These are the small tricks of God, as Fr. David Neuhaus would say. "In a land where its native inhabitants of Christian faith have been persecuted for so many centuries, the presence of so many Filipinos is an evangelical wonder, a way to change old memories with new experiences of a gentle, humble and patient service".

Therefore, in the very midst of suffering and sacrifice, together with joy and amusement, we can find the consolation of being the face of Christ, the revelation of the Father, Love. Hamdolillah! Barukh Ha Shem! Blessed be His Name for ever. ■



By Sylvester Casaclang



Salesian Spirituality

IN TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING CENTRES

As a young, energetic priest, St John Bosco found himself in a society where there were many poor and abandoned young people who were either busy working in factories and on construction sites or committing crimes just to survive in extreme poverty and misery – they were not at school! Many young people fell into the hands of unscrupulous employers while others ended up in prison. St John Bosco felt the strong calling from the Lord Jesus to be His apostle to these poor and abandoned youth. In no time, he was able to establish his own workshops and training centres for these destitute youth. He offered them a chance to study, learn some skills, and prepare themselves for a brighter and meaningful future.



In the Philippines, as in the other parts of the world where the Salesians of Don Bosco are present, St John Bosco continues to be very much alive through the technical-vocational programs his Salesians establish and manage for the poor and abandoned youth of the country.

As the Philippine government tries to address rising unemployment in the country, the stakeholders of all the Don Bosco Technical Vocational Education & Training (TVET) Centres, under the auspices of the Office for the Development of the Educational Apostolate (ODEA), meet to make sure that they are better ge-

red to fielding quality skilled citizens who respond to the needs of the industrial and service sectors. Even if these centres taken together churn out thousands of graduates, they know that to remain relevant they should not give in to complacency. But of course, for these centres, it is not just about job matching.

Different research has shown that those most at risk of delinquency are those who do not have a sense of connectedness with their society, community, Church and those who do not have positive emotional attachment to their families. Those who are unable to live in their social environment are pushed out and marginalised. Just as St John Bosco did for poor young people in Turin, the Don Bosco TVET Centers do for the marginalised here, turning them into agents of development and positive societal change. And they are deadly serious about this in spite of the fact that they are now forging into new 'territories' they have not ventured into before.

The winds of change have brought educational reforms bannered as K to 12 in the Philippines. In this regard, the TVET centres, and in fact the North and South Philippines Provinces in general, are committed to taking a proactive stance. These Centres are positioning themselves to work with the government and industries to champion the vocational tracks for grades 11 and 12.



This is coupled with provisions for Alternative Learning Systems and projections for programs that consider those who would not be selected for grades 11 and 12. While continually working with the country's Technical Education and Skill Development Authority (TESDA) for the certification of our Instructors and students, the centres have begun to benchmark their training with international standards by seeking accreditation from the Colombo Plan Staff College (CPSC) which is an Inter-governmental International Organization for human resources development in Asia and the Pacific Region. CPSC is the only regional institution established specifically to enhance the quality of TVET.

The Don Bosco TVET Centres have also realized from the start that there are a lot of people who share their cause and appreciate the significance of their initiatives. They cannot and probably should not work in isolation, they have always believed in networking and lately they have published a consolidated directory cum portfolio representing all the 19 Don Bosco TVET Centres in the Philippines. This Directory also presents their industry partners. Beyond this Directory however are innumerable meetings that have been organized by the ODEA with TESDA, Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Department of Education (DepED), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Industries and other Stakeholders.

In the midst of all these 'upheavals' in the socio-economic-educational environment, the TVET Centres had to assure themselves that they have not strayed from producing Good Christians and Honest Citizens. To this end the Spiritual Moderators of the Centres have embarked on an ambitious task of rethinking their Pastoral Programs from the Christian Living

Curriculum, to the religious experience, to the integration of values in the technical subjects, equipping our trainees with moral-spiritual skills of choice, conviction and Salesian Youth Spirituality. They are asking how (in spite of the short training period) can their trainees experience God by creating a climate of a home that welcomes, a parish that evangelizes, a school that prepares for life, and a playground where they can find true joy with true friends.

But where's the money they need to put where their mouth is? The last time I checked (February 20, 2014) they were discussing how to finance, realize and sustain all of these initiatives. This is the part where reality really bites and where fire consumes fuel. But it is also the time where our faith in men and women of good will is truly tested and our trust in God is witnessed.

The People who run these centres know that nothing worthwhile comes easy. Uncertainty however can make people nervous. But we found how these same people drew hope from the thousands of lives that are better now because of the training they received from Don Bosco. They are encouraged by the dedication of their lay mission partners. They are inspired by the many

Lay Brothers who have been part of the history of the Training Centres in the Philippines. They are cheered by the esteem of government agencies. They are consoled by corporations and industries which continue to support them in good and bad times. But also, they feel in their hearts that these challenges just might be the voice of the Spirit inviting them to make all things new in Christ. ■





You are the Salt... S.A.L.T.

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By Angel Sanchez





“You are the salt of the earth...”
(Mt 5:13)

How do we put into action this call
of Jesus in everyday life?
How can we become the salt
of the earth?

For more than a decade, Don Bosco Technical School (DBTS) in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, developed a special program for students – in particular for graduated classes of level 12 and of level 2 of the Technical Industrial Course of the Servanthood and Leadership Training – SALT. The planning, implementation and assessment of this program are carried out by the spiritual guide of the school, in collaboration with his pastoral team. Every Sale-

sian Youth Centre aims at forming the youth so that they may become “upright citizens and good Christians”. At Don Bosco Technical School in Port Moresby this reality is shown in the motto “Bosconians, Guide Those you Serve”. In other words, Bosconians try to become the salt of the earth by becoming leader-servants. The SALT Program is a good means to instil Salesian values and attitudes. This makes it possible to transmit the various elements of Salesian Youth Spirituality in the specific Melanesian context. The youth who graduate from Don Bosco Technical School assume the attitudes of Salesian spirituality they have been taught since their first years in school. In a country and in a culture where people always request a “reward” for whatever is asked of them, the young of Don Bosco Technical School learn to serve others without expecting anything in return. This experience widens their horizons and gives them the opportunity to do something good for others. When asked to describe his experience in SALT Program, Kenesi Sogiri (of level 12) described it simply saying, “Serving others with joy, without asking for money...” This is the way in which Don Bosco Technical School contributes to the formation of the youth in Papua New Guinea. Before doing the SALT Program, the students spend a whole day in the school to which they have been sent. Team building activities are organized. Talks and speeches are delivered. Celebration of the liturgy and spontaneous prayer also are integrated. All these activities aim at motivating the youth to make Don Bosco’s ideals their own. “As Bosconians, we call ourselves leader-servants. Therefore we must put into practice service to others”, says Alois Tivelit, he too of level 12. And so, for a few Saturdays, those who are enrolled in the SALT Program render some services in the communities in diverse quarters of Port Moresby city. They learn to “roll up their sleeves”. Then it is not a surprise to see them engaged in cleaning and garbage collection in public streets. Bosconians are not afraid to dirty their hands! These youth are not left alone in their services to the community. The respective teachers accompany them in this experience. In this way, the SALT Program becomes for the teachers too a moment to learn and practise Salesian assistance. In this context, the presence of the educator is important in the

sense that SALT is not only a social activity but above all an educative activity and a formative experience. It is also to be noted that not all the students of Don Bosco Technical School are Catholic. Many of them in fact belong to other Christian denominations. But the places where students do their community service are generally sectors of Catholic parishes. This requires a previous coordination of the activities that involve several Parish priests of the city. Because of this, some of our students committed to the SALT Program have later become animators in their own parishes. This has awakened in them the sense of belonging to the local church, helping them mature a choice of voluntary work in their own parishes. But the service of Bosconians is not limited to Catholic parishes alone. Cheshire Home community also, a home for disabled, benefits from their presence. Meeting people with disabilities is always a very formative experience. Youngsters become aware how lucky they are and form their heart to be compassionate and attentive to others. Sometimes the social context favours the creation of groups of rascals who are often responsible for many crimes. Some of our children come from these contexts. Through the SALT Program, there is the possibility to visit Bomana prison, in the outskirts of Port Moresby city, where many young people are detained. Sometimes our pupils are given the possibility to interact with the detainees. Don Bosco used to say that we must form the youth to recognize “the ugliness of sin and the beauty of virtue”. In Bomana prison, Bosconians make a first hand experience of the consequences of an inconsiderate use of freedom. In prison, all traces of human misery are to be found. In this context, the youth understand the necessity of dreaming to have a more luminous future. Another student who recently passed out, Don Apini, acknowledges how the Salesian school had a great impact on his life. “I decided to be a true Bosconian, not only in name, but also with the concrete deeds of my life”. Even if the SALT Program lasts only a few Saturdays, it remains for the youth a unique experience and what they learn lingers on after graduation. It is something they treasure and cherish, because SALT does not lose its taste... ■







ITALY



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SALESIANS *in the world*

Witnesses to Joy

On the Way to 2015

“And I say it again – be happy!” It is a 2,000-year-old invitation, but just as relevant and provocative today for young people all over the world. In Turin, from 10th to 16th August 2013, you could see it in the courtyards, streets, churches, squares thronging with 1,200 young people from the Italian SYM who had gathered for the national 'Confronto' or youth festival.



Joy was the key element throughout – not a minute without it. This was not a lone event but a stage in a journey which young people around the world are called to take up in the Church to be the present and the future, the “saints of the new millennium” (Saint John Paul II).

At the Madrid World Youth Day the SYM rediscovered the reasons for its hope in being “Rooted in and founded on Christ, firm in faith”. The Rio WYD, which took place at the end of the Year of Faith, invited young people of the world to: “Go and make disciples of all people”. Thus the Italian SYM Festival could do no other than draw on the wealth of the Church’s journey, reinterpreting the ideas of joy and witness in the light of Salesian youth spirituality. The slogan guiding the Festival, *Witnesses of joy*, expresses and brings about what Don Bosco offered his young people in the introduction to *The Companion of Youth*: “I would like to teach you a method of Christian living which will at the same time make you happy and content”. The Festival allowed young people from around Italy to be immersed in Salesian youthful spirituality tasting every aspect of it to the full; it offered a real experience of the Salesian playground: a providential combination of joy, festivity, prayer, reflection, confidence, familiarity, listening, significant encounter, trust in Mary.

Salesian Pilgrimage

The week’s program was marked by music and festivity but also by celebrations and time for prayer; time spent in listening to the ideas offered, but also in dialogue and exchange of experiences; taking note of the places of Salesian history and society in Turin, but also discovering the spirituality and beauty of Mornese, Chieri and Colle Don Bosco.

Don Bosco was given voice at Valdocco, speaking of complete and lasting happiness being possible only when we live in grace, being actively Christian. Joy is the educational climate he wanted “breathed” in his works. Daily Mass and confession were basic moments each day during the Festival.

When they went to Mornese the young people were guided by the life of Main, as the young Mary Domenica Mazzarello was known, through a story of holiness achieved through little (but great) things, little (but heroic) daily gestures, an extraordinary example of holiness in daily activity.

In Turin’s streets, places around the city where Don

Bosco lived and had a thousand adventures, one sensed this intimate relationship between the Salesian charism and the Church. The SYM is part of the Church as an offering of holiness for all young people.

A morning of festivity at Chieri rediscovered John Bosco’s youth and the growth of his priestly vocation. None of this could have happened without a deep friendship with Jesus, an essential feature of Salesian spirituality which Don Bosco would then propose to his youngsters. Colle Don Bosco, called the Salesian Bethlehem, saw the arrival of 1,200 pilgrims at the Hill of Youthful Beatitudes, as John Paul II described it at the very first Festival in 1988.

The adoration vigil and the Mass allowed the joy in their hearts to explode in a festive moment enlivened by the presence of Fr. Pascual Chavez.

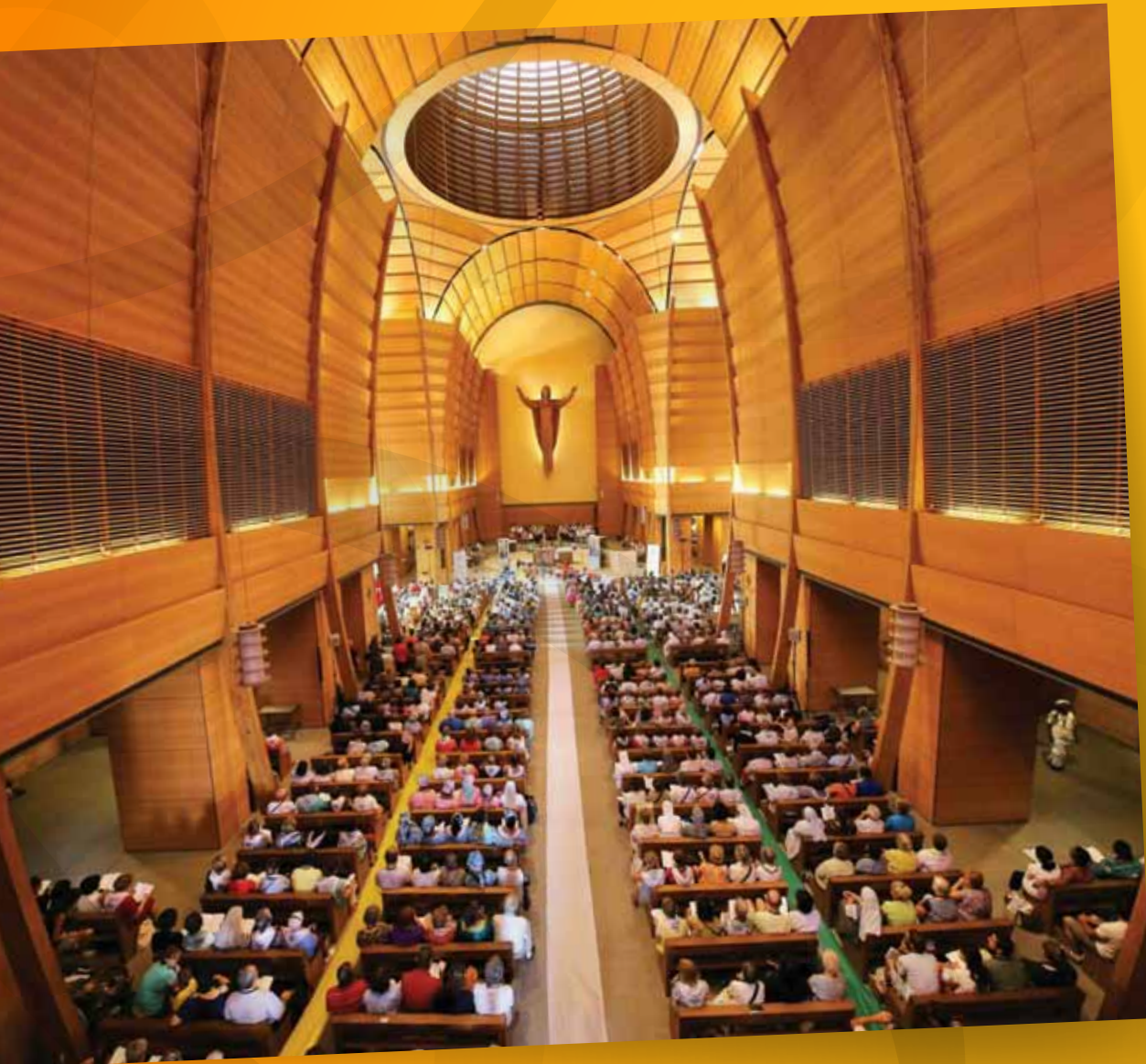
The Rector Major opened the third and final year of preparation for the Bicentenary in 2015 by inviting young people to focus on Don Bosco, true master of spiritual life, and to draw on him for their own spirituality, inflaming their hearts with his pastoral charity, meeting Christ and getting other young people to meet him, so that every one can become a credible “witness of joy”.

Those who were there still carry three clear brief reminders that Fr. Pascual addressed to them on this his final encounter as Rector Major with Italian SYM: the first, “Don’t waste your life: your very existence is at stake”; the second, “Nurture desires: nobody can dream big until they have seen the stars”; and the last, “Learn to swim against the tide: it is the only way to be fruitful in love”.

A proposal of Salesian holiness

The third millennium needs saints, young people who are holy in little things and in their grand choices, in their ordinary and extraordinary activities, in profound joy in a life which is a witness to Christ’s resurrection.

The week’s festival simply cannot be summed up in a few lines or shown in a few images, but to find an icon which is meaningful and could have the power to describe young people united in heart and soul in a single Spirit we might describe it with the *flashmob* at Piazza Castello. All of a sudden, on 12th August at 12 noon, the square was filled with 1200 young people running in from the surrounding streets and forming a large, human “MGS” and dancing to the Festival hymn, “JOY!”. Perhaps it is this joy in Christ which is the purest form of Salesian youthful spirituality. ■



Festive

spirituality





A Celebration of Faith and Fellowship for the Young

YOUTH *pasch*

By Guwahati Province

Guwahati is the gateway to the northeast of India and the largest city of the Assam region. Salesians arrived in 1922, and soon spread to every nook and corner of the region with their youth services, especially education and holistic development. Guwahati province, established in 1959, has given birth to two other provinces since 1981, and can still be considered as the central locus where the Salesian youth of the entire northeast can gather. Don Bosco Youth Pasch, celebrated annually at Don Bosco Institute (DBI), Guwahati, is one great event which brings Salesian youth from all the three Provinces and beyond for spiritual experience and faith formation.



Fr. Johnson Parackal, Director of DBI, reminisces about the origin of Youth Pasch in Guwahati: “Way back in 2004, when about 100 young people came together to celebrate the Paschal Mysteries at Don Bosco Institute Guwahati, under the leadership of Fr. V.M. Thomas, SDB, the founder director of the institute and present Provincial of Guwahati Province, little did one realize that something momentous had just taken place. Since then, at Easter time, hordes of youth have been flocking to DBI to have a live-in experience of the Paschal Mystery of Christ.”



THIS MEETING HAS BECOME SYNONYMOUS
WITH THE EASTER CELEBRATION
OF YOUTHFUL FAITH.



For more than a decade 'Youth Pasch' has lighted up DBI with the joy and radiance of faith lived and experienced in a Salesian way by hundreds of youth. Today it has become synonymous with Catholic Youth faith celebration for the northeast region of the country. Ms Mazzarello Mh. Boko, a participant at Youth Pasch 2014, speaks thus of her experience: "Youth Pasch was a unique experience for me. Everything was organized so well and in detail. We shared together our faith in Jesus. This was one of the best spiritual programmes I have ever attended."

Youth Pasch is an experiential spiritual event for the youth. "The spiritual package is offered in an engaging manner, in a style most appealing to the young people of today; and I would say, in a style that is typically Salesian. It ensures that every individual takes an active part in the powerful prayer experience", says Fr. Parackal.

As a fruit of the methodology used in the celebration of Youth Pasch, a personal and spiritual transformation is facilitated in the young participants, leading them closer to Christ. The passion of Christ and the hope of the Resurrection are also experientially shared through input sessions, and the liturgy of each day is solemnized

in an attractive, appropriate and prayerful manner. At the start of Holy Week, Don Bosco Institute begins to bustle with preparations. Young people start flocking from various parts of the northeast region of the country to DBI Guwahati, perched atop the misty green hills overlooking the majestic Brahmaputra river.

The celebrations commence on Wednesday of the Holy Week. Catechesis and bible study sessions are held with young people, preparing them well to enter into the Paschal Mystery of Christ. "Learning, studying and knowing the bible in depth was an eye-opener to me", says Ms Gracy Kullu from Dibrugarh diocese. "The symbolic meaning of the words of the bible was unknown to me earlier, and now I am delighted to be acquainted with them".

On Holy Thursday, during the morning hours, Christian doctrine is shared with the young participants as they study and reflect on the Word of God.

The evening celebrations include the solemn enactment of the Washing of the Feet and the Last Supper of the Lord by young people themselves. These liturgical rituals, so central to the Christian faith and filled with meaning, are re-lived in a manner that is touching and appealing to the sensibilities of the young people.



On Good Friday, the focus is on the passion and death of Christ. The impressive celebration of the Way of the Cross gives the young people an opportunity to experience the meaning of suffering and to consider their own difficulties in the light of Christ's sufferings. The youth themselves act out Jesus' painful journey through the enactment of the Fourteen Stations. It makes the participants emotionally involved in the journey. Samuel Maslai, of Umswai, recalling his Youth Pasch experience says: "The animation on the paschal Mystery of Christ really touched me personally. The Word of God has provoked me, and definitely I will make known to others what Christ has done for me."

"On this day of the memorial of our redemption the youngsters are offered an opportunity to experience the healing power of the Lord through the Sacrament of Reconciliation", says Fr. Parackal, the chief organizer of this spiritual event. Making the celebration a youthful experience in a Salesian way and providing the ground for reconciliation, is also a dance drama entitled "*He Lives*", performed by the youth, which depicts Peter the apostle's repentance and renewal.

The meditation and input sessions on Holy Saturday prepare the young people for the Vigil celebration

THE THEATRICAL EXPRESSION IS A GOOD MEANS TO TRANSMIT THE FAITH.

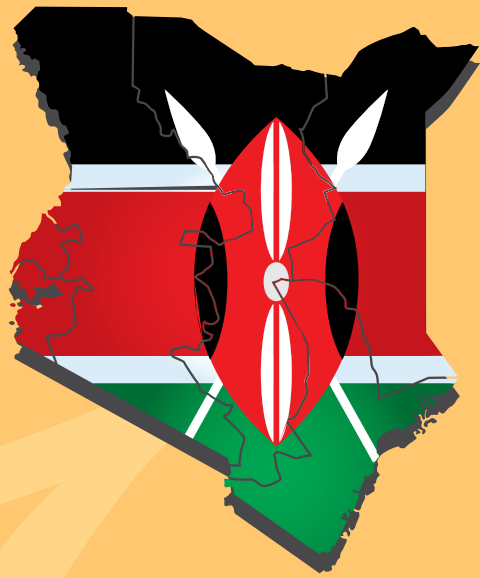
and help them to enter into the mystery of New Life in Christ and experience the power of His Resurrection in a very personal and profound manner.

"We Salesians are an Easter people, a people of joy and life! And that is what Youth Pasch celebration on Easter Sunday expresses as we gather on the banks of the Brahmaptura for the climax", says Fr. Parackal. The Galilee experience on the banks of the gigantic river, soon after the solemn Eucharistic celebration on Easter Sunday morning, gives the young people an opportunity to express their joy and happiness through music, songs, dance, in the company of their peers, friends and educators. They share also a fellowship meal there.

The evening spent in praise and worship and in the company of one another makes the entire Pasch experience a journey of faith and fellowship, where they encounter the Risen Lord who walks with them. They go back refreshed, renewed and with a firm resolve to serve Christ in the needy brothers and sisters of their neighbourhood. ■



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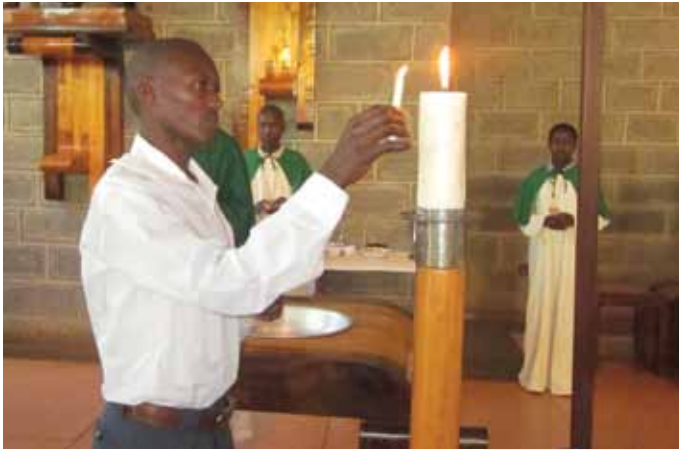


Faith in Action

“I look forward to it every month.”
“I wish it were more than once a month.”
” It has helped me to strengthen my faith.”
These are some of the comments made by the youth who come for the youth Liturgy, “Come and Celebrate,” which is held once a month at the green lawns of Don Bosco Youth Educational Services (DBYES), Nairobi, a Youth Animation and Empowerment Centre in the Province of Eastern Africa.

By Sebastian Koladiyil





This program, “Come and Celebrate”, targets the boarding school students around Nairobi, Kenya. Many schools do not have Mass for the Catholic students in their schools so DBYES thought it fit to have a monthly Celebration of the Youth Liturgy for the students of the boarding schools around, on the first Sunday of every month, when they are not on holidays.

They come in big numbers to be part of it, an average of around 400 Catholic Students from around 8 to 12 Secondary Schools in the area. The only purpose behind this is to celebrate faith, for the young people to feel proud of the fact that they are Catholics in a usually non-Catholic environment in which they study and live. Each group is accompanied by a leader-cum-actor, often a teacher from their school.

A typical celebration

The day starts with registration followed by praise and worship, lively spiritual songs sung in a typical African style, the students swinging to the lively beats of African drums and other instruments. Through this they are led into a spiritual atmosphere preparing them to listen to a talk on the theme of the day. This talk is given by a priest or religious and at times a youth minister who is a lay person. After the talk, the youngsters are divided into groups and questions based on the given talk are distributed for their sharing and discussion. At the end of the group discussion the answers are shared in the common assembly and any further questions are clarified in the general assembly. This is followed by a short break, giving the students time to prepare for the mass. Up to this point, priests are

available to hear confessions of the youth and it is truly encouraging to see many frequenting the sacrament or for a talk with a priest. Every part of the Mass is distributed for animation to different schools: serving at the mass, leading the singing, readings, liturgical dances, leading the prayers of the faithful and the offertory procession. Often the Mass lasts about two hours, after which the whole group is given a half an hour’s break during which each school takes their picnic lunch and socialises with the rest.

After lunch, it is fun time. Every school is invited to present various items such as song, dance, play/skit etc., all on the theme of the day, coupled with music for dancing. At the end the winner is given a trophy. By evening it is time to say goodbye, often hard to do, and they promise to meet again the following month.



THE FAMILY IS THE SETTING IN WHICH FAITH AND LOVE ARE PRESERVED.

“COME AND CELEBRATE” IS AN EXPERIENCE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE.

Topics

The theme for the year 2013 was faith, given that it was the Year of Faith. The topics that were dealt with were: Faith and/in the Bible, Faith and the Church, Faith and Prayer, Faith as the Creed, Faith, Science, Media, Faith and Spirituality, Faith and Service – Charity, Faith beyond now – Hope.

Since 2014 is the Year of the Family, the topics that are being dealt with are: Family in the Bible, Youth –Parent Communication in the Family, Preparing

ourselves as Youth for Family life, John Paul II & the Family, African Values in dialogue with Christianity, Sacredness of Sexuality within Marriage, Family as a little Church, Family and Vocation.

We hope to continue this tradition for the years to come.

The occasion gives these youngsters a chance to mix and mingle with students from other schools in a healthy mixed-gender atmosphere, since most of the boarding schools around Nairobi are boys or girls’ schools. It is good for them to express their faith, live it in a visible manner and take pride in the fact that they are, like us, Catholic family too. Then their faith also needs to be taught. Catechesis occurs during these gatherings. Many doubts are cleared and the youth leave the event with a sense of fulfilment, strengthened in their faith. ■

By Marc-Auguste Kambire



Baptism and Eucharist - Sacraments of Joy

My name is Matthew Lawson, studying Masters in Public Law and Political Science at the University of Lomé. There are certain events in life which mark our existence and force us to pause. What I am about to tell you in what follows is an experience that marked my life.



It all began on a Saturday afternoon. My mother customarily went to the market on Saturday to get the provisions for the week. I would take advantage of the occasion to play football with my friends. That afternoon I saw my mother return and she asked me to accompany her to the Parish of Our Lady Help of Christians at Gbényedzi (located in the east of Lomé and run by the Salesians) to begin my catechism. To be truthful, she had told me often enough that I had to start catechism, but I refused to go, and that afternoon was a black Saturday for me because she forced me to go. I was 11 years old.

Once we got to the parish, we were directed to the class for the little ones. My mother handed me over to the catechist and went back home. I went into the classroom, but I remained elusive, silent and bitter. The reason was that I was put in a group I did not know. It took more than three sessions for me to fit into the group and especially to begin to get interested in what was actually going on: catechism. From being loath to abandon football for catechism class, I began to feel happy going to Jesus' school. The family spirit in the classroom and teaching virtues like respect for others and doing well at school were the things that motivated me to go to catechism class.

I was made a class leader and had to look after discipline, organise question and answer sessions, and take the attendance roll. I learned how to lead a group. Easter Sunday 2005 was the day I made my First Communion. Ever since I have thought of this day as the day I was able to approach the Holy Table for the first time. I could not describe the joy I felt when I received the Body and Blood of Christ for the first time. At that age, we wanted to go to Christ's table to enjoy what we had been prevented from doing earlier. Curiosity to taste the Body and Blood of Christ has changed, over the years, to being a source of health for me. I discovered in the Sacrament of the Eucharist the source of human health. During the week that followed Easter Sunday, I went regularly to Mass and my family asked me to pray for them. Alas, the enthusiasm of those ear-

ly days waned and I even stopped going to catechism for some time. I was convinced that in receiving these sacraments, I had gained my 'Catholic Identity Card', the certificate I needed, and that was enough.

At the invitation of my catechist I joined the group called Jésus miséricordieux (Merciful Jesus) in 2008. While I was in this group I began catechesis for receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation in 2011. It was then that I began to take part in the life of the group and my parish. I was elected as a member of the local youth coordination team. My involvement in the group allowed me to remain attached to Christ and I continued to meditate on the graces received through the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

Joyful Encounter

There are many like Matthew who receive the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist at Easter. From 1982 until May 2014, the Parish has registered 20,046 baptisms and 17,197 have received First Communion. This means a yearly average of 626 catechumens baptised and 537 baptised people who have received First Communion. The celebration of these Sacraments, according to Mrs Désiré Goncalves (parish catechetics coordinator) "is an opportunity for the parish to express its joy at seeing its sons and daughters born again and become part of the Christian family. In the Éwé culture (people from South Togo), a child is welcomed into society eight days after birth. The Sacrament of Baptism is the ceremony by which we welcome the newly born into God's family. This is an opportunity to bring families together to celebrate the joy of seeing one of their own become a Christian. Something of interest in this parish is the occasion offered to the neophytes to give thanks to God and to consecrate themselves to Mary Help of Christians after a Mass celebrated in their honour on Easter Monday afternoon".

Thus, the parish is such a genuine place of joy in the lives of these newcomers, most of whom are young. It is a means for the Salesian community to practise the spirituality of joy, a hallmark of Salesian spirituality. ■





Easter Fruit

Zamora, where the Salesians have a very pastorally active church, is a medium-sized city in the Mexican Republic, firmly rooted in Christian tradition stemming more from practices of piety and celebrations than a deep Gospel conviction. Christian formation of boys and girls is falling apart and it is common for them to fall into indifference and religious ignorance.

Easter Fruit is a group belonging to the Salesian Youth Movement that endeavours to rescue youngsters and lead them to a keen, happy, profound faith amidst a superficial society which is contaminated by consumerism and aimed at "having more" rather than "being more". It is a youth movement hinging on Jesus' words "Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty" (John 15:5).

"How boring!" Monse said when an Easter Fruit member invited her to be part of the church group. "The Church is so boring", she said. We need to know that Monse was a really good girl, but without any spiritual horizons. She had really been alienated from the Church, and God did not fall within the ambit of her youthful interests. Reluctantly she accepted the invitation because she would be going with a friend and... surprise! She was shown great signs of welcome. In a short time her life changed, she tells us, and now she is dedicated full-time to the apostolate of leading her friends to discover friendship with Jesus. She confesses that she has found true happiness and "Jesus is her hero". The others in the group lend their time and their hands and invite their friends at school or in the local district to be part of Easter Fruit.

Erik is 20 and a few years back was suffering from the disorder known as anorexia, with other complexes and apathy. He was insecure and uncommunicative. Now he has become a leader and adviser for new groups, because for him God has become a perceivable presence in his daily life, "always with me; I thank him when I go to sleep and also when I awake." He is an artist at heart, sings and plays many instruments,





lives up liturgies and entertainment, and is a dear friend for the whole group because, he says, "the group is where you find true friends", and he has completely identified with the spirit of Don Bosco, fighting to bring his friends to Jesus.

Oscar has just turned 17, is doing computer science, likes languages and reading. "I especially love the way Don Bosco showed holiness to young people, a youthful, everyday holiness, a happy and achievable holiness." Oscar considers holiness as a deep happiness that stems from doing one's duty, and he remembers well Dominic Savio's words to his friend Camillo Gavio

at Don Bosco's Oratory: "My friend, here holiness consists in being happy; we try to avoid sin because it is the enemy which robs us of God's grace and peace of mind; we go to the sacraments and practices of piety, and we do our duty well ... and don't forget what the Scriptures say "Serve the Lord with happiness."

All the youngsters who belong to Easter Fruit have similar stories. They have developed at greater or less speed from a human and spiritual situation of less relevance, without attractive horizons, amidst family conflicts and a certain boredom based on parties and fictional amusement, to a life that begins to fill their being with the true happiness that comes from a pure friendship with and commitment to God. They find this through apostolic activities where they pass on to friends what they themselves have experienced. Jesus said: "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete."

Checo (Sergio) and Grecia are close friends who have grown and matured in Easter Fruit. Now they are "sowers", which is the stage following the basic three year preparation common to all. Grecia is finishing her studies to be a teacher. The topic of her graduation thesis is "Don Bosco's educational system". Checo has been the soul of the movement since the beginnings and is the right-hand man of the founder, Salesian Fr. Alejandro Guzmán. It troubles him to see boys and girls affected by lack of love, faith and education, falling into bad habits that no one knows how to fix, facing life disadvantaged and helpless

before the models of selfishness and social indifference which today's culture offers them.

Easter Fruit convinces boys and girls at a stage of life where the search for meaning becomes urgent. It is almost certain that they all fall into the arms of Jesus who welcomes them as a friend, because

Don Bosco's spirituality is tailored to their deepest needs. ■



By Marina Lomunno

Feast of Don Bosco

in the Mother House





The feast of Don Bosco had its central moment in the late afternoon of 31st January, 2015 in the Basilica of Mary Help Of Christians: the Mass of the young people of the Salesian Youth Movement, presided over by the Rector Major Fr. Angel Fernández Artime. A festive celebration, with representatives from all over the world of the 30 (both lay and religious) units that compose the Salesian Family and with hundreds of young people who unbelievably filled the Basilica.

Lord Jesus is the authentic way to everybody's happiness

The Rector Major, continuing the tradition of his predecessor Fr. Pascual Chavez Villanueva, who was present in Turin for the celebrations of the Bicentenary, delivered to the young of the Salesian Youth Movement and ideally to the youth of 132 countries where Salesians work, the message of the liturgical feast of Don Bosco, taken from the first letter of St John: "I write to you, young people, because you are strong, and the Word of God lives in you". "I chose these words from the first letter of S. John – said the Rector Major – because it seems to me a beautiful actualization of the call the Lord Jesus gives today, today to each one of you and which Don Bosco, with his educative genius, would undoubtedly turn into a challenge and a goal of everyday life for his youth. My dear youth, I cannot hide this deep conviction of mine: the Lord, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the Father, is the authentic way to true happiness of each one of us, of each one of you. Don Bosco believed blindly, fully in you, young people. Don Bosco made his own the worries, hopes and joys of his youth (and of you), living with his youth, among them and with them, in what was a special gift in him, to be a man of personal relationship, of good character, of friendship and dialogue, he gave to the youth all his trust

to be really "strong" in the way of life, strong in faith, firmly believing in their capabilities and possibilities, believing that you can be and must be – because this is what the Lord asks – the true protagonists of your own lives".

30 Groups, 132 Countries

In the morning, the superiors and coordinators of the 30 components of the Salesian Family gathered in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians for the first time on the occasion of the Bicentenary, animating the playground of Valdocco with the colours and languages of 132 countries where the Salesians are present: "We gathered on the occasion of the 200 years since Don Bosco's birth – said Sr. Yvonne Reungoat, the Mother General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians – to create more synergy among the various components of the Salesian Family, to strengthen the bond of the sons and daughters of Don Bosco and of Mother Mazzarello. It is the charism of our saint that unites us: but the more we manage to know each other and to integrate together, the better can we serve the Church. In order to be a sign of peace in the world, we Christians first of all must grow in dialogue, pull down parochialisms... Don Bosco does not belong to the Salesian Family alone, but to the whole Church and to all those, also non Christians, who love the young". ■



By Lijo Vadakkan



**SALESIAN FLAG FLIES
IN AN ORTHODOX LAND**

Salesians in Ethiopia





In the Holy Bible, a certain nation called Ethiopia is described as “a nation of tall and smooth-skinned people, a nation mighty and conquering, feared near and far” (Isaiah 18:2). Ethiopia today is widely renowned for her old civilization and is also proud of being one of the first countries to accept Christ and Christianity. As a matter of fact, according to the history of Christianity, the only person who asked, “What prevents me from being baptized?” is an Ethiopian. The Apostle Philip said: “If you heartily believe, it is permitted.” The Ethiopian replied: “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” (Acts. 8: 37-38).

A ‘Dreamer’ for Africa.

In the *Biographical Memoirs of Don Bosco*, two dreams particularly in connection with Africa can be found. The first dream took place in 1866, where a shepherdess appeared to Don Bosco and showed him the growth of the Congregation through the image of a sunbeam passing from Santiago to Peking through the continent of Africa. (*MB XVIII*, 71 ff.). The second one is recorded to have taken place in the year 1885, in which Don Bosco dreamt he was standing in central Africa where he

was told by an angel that blessings would soon descend upon the continent (*MB XVII*, 643, 645).

That’s part of history! However, it took almost 90 years to realise this dream of Don Bosco in Ethiopia as the first Salesians set foot on Ethiopian soil only in 1975. Ever since the arrival of these pioneers, the priority of the Salesians in Ethiopia has been the education and holistic growth of thousands of youngsters frequenting a network of more than 14 Salesian presences spread across the country.

The Dream Continues...

The Salesian mission among the youth of Ethiopia has been a rather challenging one due to the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural backgrounds of Ethiopia. While the country had been traditionally acclaimed as primarily a Christian nation, in recent times the Muslim population in the country has grown considerably and today there is roughly the same number of Muslims as Christians. But Catholics—Latin and Ge’ez combined—make up less than 1 per cent of Ethio-



pia's nearly 85 million people. Nevertheless, it needs to be said that the Catholic Church plays a disproportionately influential role in the lives of many Ethiopians, especially through its schools, clinics and other social service institutions. There are more than 350 Catholic schools operating around the country, enrolling some 120,000 Ethiopian students each year and that makes the Catholic Church the largest educational organisation after the Government. Among these, 19 schools are owned by the Salesians, comprising Primary, Secondary, Technical Schools and Colleges.

Evanġelising in a multi-religious context

The major challenge for the Salesians in Ethiopia is precisely to make Don Bosco's charism present in a multi-religious environment and that too in a country like Ethiopia where the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is deeply rooted in the life and history of the people right from the beginning of Christianity. It has not been rare that sometimes Orthodox priests have even forbidden their faithful to attend courses and take part in the rec-

reational activities in the Salesian centres, convinced that they were just facades behind which the youth will be induced to embrace Catholicism. Today however, with patience and endurance they are realising that the Orthodox and Catholic Church share a common aim: the development of young people and the development of society as a whole.

The Salesian Youth Ministry in the Vice-Province has made great strides in this regard accompanying the youth to bring about harmony between Catholic and Orthodox spirituality. Catechism classes, Savio clubs, Circus and Drama groups in the various oratories of the Vice-Province are all part of formation to faith combined with recreational activities. Moral classes and the evening study programs in the oratory at Adwa for instance, in the northern region of Tigray, are things that the Past Pupils remember even to this day. The result is the number of vocations to Salesian life that have come from these oratories, often from traditional Orthodox families despite harsh opposition from their families.



Salesian Youth Day at Mekanissa.

The Salesian Youth Day held this year at Mekanissa was a mega-initiative in this regard to bring youth leaders from the various Salesian Oratories together. The program was held at Bosco Children, Mekanissa. The event saw more than 250 youth leaders take part from the various oratories, to share their views and ideas, to celebrate their differences and to make it a forum for transformation. The three days were organised in such a way that the young people and the Salesians could participate together in sessions of music and sports in a spirit of joy and prayer. Among the youth there were Muslims and Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants but all living under the umbrella of Don Bosco with the unique aim of creating a better world. ■



Missionary spirituality





By Alfred Maravilla

Send Me, O Lord!

Go into the whole world...

During his life, Don Bosco sent eleven missionary expeditions, but none of them will ever exceed the enthusiasm of the first one. Among the many who responded to his call, Don Bosco chose six priests and four lay-brothers. It was an epochal event for the Congregation and for the city of Turin! The departure from Valdocco was solemn: 11th November, 1875. It is the beginning of a missionary epoch that will develop in all continents, with the enculturation of the Salesian charism everywhere: "I always did what I could. What remains to be done, will be done by my children". Since 1875 the Salesian Congregation is Missionary. Already by 1888, 20% of the Salesians were living in the Missions in America. And the Congregation still continues to live this specific vocation with enthusiasm and generosity.

But why being missionaries? What is it that motivates even today this call, may be in countries with a totally different culture, in places which are often unsafe and very poor? Odise Lazri (an Albanian, who left in 2013 as a missionary for South Africa) says, "Being a missionary for me is being the spokesperson of Jesus, bringing the good news of the resurrection of the Lord; the joy of the Risen One where it has not yet arrived". Fr. Roberto (an Italian who went to Brazil in 2012): "From my experience as a Salesian who has already been several times in the missions, both in Brazil and Madagascar, I can say that Salesians have a great target, which is giving always new hope, new strength, a great faith to new generations". Fr. Sony (an Indian who left for Sierra Leone in 2013): "The main goal of mission today is making Christ known to those who still do not know him and directing people to God. We live in a world where God is not important and therefore we must make Jesus and his Word known in a secularized world. In the Bicentenary of Don Bosco's birth, all Salesians are called to re-live his missionary spirit. "The missionary trait became typical of every Salesian, because it is to be found in the same Salesian spirit", wrote Fr. Juan Vecchi, the sixth successor of Don Bosco. "Therefore it is not some-





Fr. Luigi Bolla: "When the ship left the harbor of Genoa, I lived one of the most beautiful moments of my life... It is a moment when the Lord tells you: 'I am everything only for you', a moment of infinite joy. This is the witness I wish we could retain, because it can encourage young people who so often doubt, who say 'I go and try'... It is better to go, open to everything..."





thing added for some. It is the heart of pastoral charity, it is the gift that characterizes the vocation of all". To the members of the 145th missionary expedition (2014), the present successor of Don Bosco, Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime, asserted: "Saying 'Salesians' today means being among the poorest and most needy people of society; it should not be only a slogan, but a reality (···) It must be the missionary passion that every Salesian feels to go to the young; therefore we need a congregation that is closer to them, to people, to society. This will guarantee the continuity of our charism and mission". Brazilian Deacon José Alves de Oliveira who was asked to work among the Xavantes in his own country: "Many missionaries, leaving their





homelands, dedicated themselves to this work with faith and love. So, in this indigenous reality, I see myself as part of the dream of many other dreamers... and as part of the challenge of GC27, that calls us to be Don Bosco in the real frontiers of peripheries, and where a prophetic and evangelizing presence is most needed”.

“Celebrating the Bicentenary of Don Bosco’s birth means also returning to our missionary roots”, insists Fr. Guillermo Basañes, Councillor for the Missions. “Let us live this Jubilee as a Salesian missionary outreach. Let the solemn conclusion of these celebrations, on 15th August, 2015 find Don Bosco’s children “bruised, hurting and dirty because *they have* been out on the streets, rather than (···) unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to *their* own security” (Pope Francis, *Evangeli Gaudium*, 49). “Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ!”. This is the best birthday gift we can offer our dear Giovannino!

Today Pope Francis enlightens us: living this missionary dimension of our charism means keeping our passion for Jesus and his people alive, living our Salesian life in a permanent state of mission. Thus we overcome ‘pastoral acedia’, ‘small-mindedness’ and ‘tomb psychology’ and we find once more the joy of evangelization! (*Evangeli Gaudium* 25, 82-83, 268).

Besides, the most beautiful expression of this missionary spirit is leaving one’s own land, one’s own people to announce the Gospel of Christ. And so, every year, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin this tradition of sending and of bidding farewell to missionaries is renewed. With the handing over of the crucifix and the fraternal embrace, a personal and community journey of preparation is completed. Missionary vocation is a long love story between God who calls and the apostle who responds. It is always God who chooses. Man is never so great as when he says “yes” to God who passes by and calls. ■



By Roberto Cappelletti, Italian, Missionary in Brazil

The Missionary's Voice

I do not know when my Salesian vocation was exactly born. One thing I know well though is how it has developed over the years. Since childhood, and then in the Salesian novitiate, I was always impressed by the stories of missionaries from distant lands who came to speak to us of their lives among the poorest. Through the years my concern for the poor has always been present, but perhaps, like the fire in a fireplace, it was a little hidden under the embers of the many activities and my studies. In the Salesian house in Mezzano I had the opportunity to get in touch with Brazil, through twinning and visits in that country. It was there that the fire was decisively rekindled. I was then assigned as Province Delegate for Missionary Animation of the INE Province. The trips with the young people of School of Awareness of Global Re-

alities and the summer experiences in Madagascar have confirmed my desire to spend my life among the poorest. Some say "we also need the Salesians here in Italy, so why do you have to go to the missions?" This is an objection which might sound reasonable if the choice to leave one's country to be a missionary *ad gentes* were seen only from the material, numerical and statistical point of view. But whoever leaves for the mission does not run away from something.

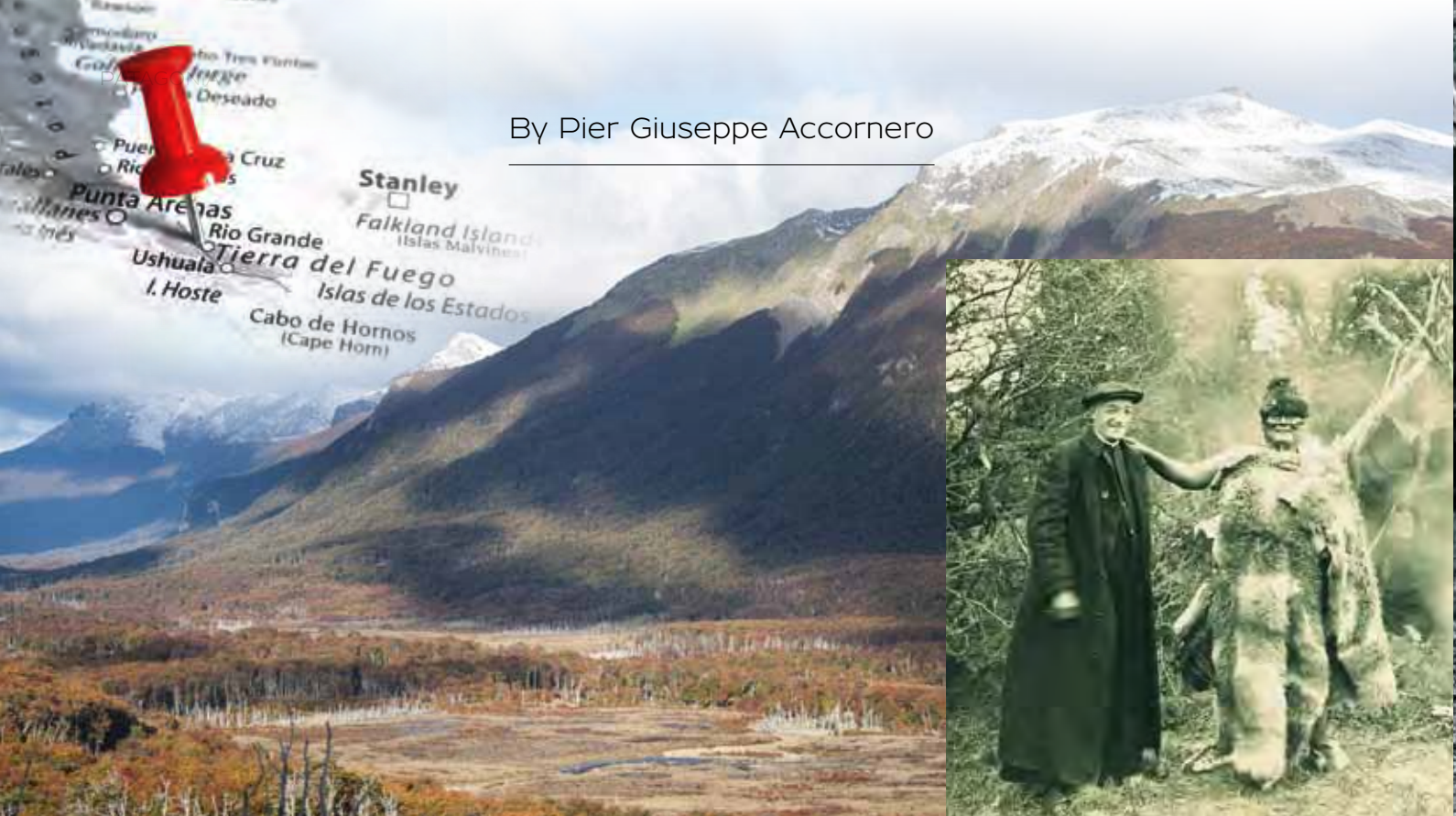
He goes in order to live fully one's own vocation, in my case my Salesian vocation. By placing my application to be a missionary *ad gentes* directly in the hands the Rector Major, I wanted to state that my life belongs to God and not to me, and I would like to live it for the poorest and farthest. It will not be so much what I can give, but



I'm sure the feeling of happiness inside me for what I do with the poor is the best answer to many initial doubts. Now I am in Itajaí, a port city in southern Brazil; a city that, for the most part, is made up of people who are well off, who work to earn their living. But even in a city like this, there are hundreds of people and children who live on the margins, in dilapidated houses, in situations of violence, marginalisation and drugs. At

this time I am working here especially for them, to give them a hope and a future through education, personal development, accompaniment and the witness through social service which I endeavour to give together with the educative pastoral community of Parque Dom Bosco. Surely, I too sometimes wonder if I am in the right place, in a city where most of the inhabitants live a European style of life, without too many problems. But for now I'm here, with the dream that perhaps, one day, I will be able to give my life in a more radical and poorer missionary context than where I am now. This has always been my dream. But where I am and wherever I'll be sent or where I wish to go I will always try my best to live my Salesian missionary vocation, giving my every breath to the least and the poorest! ■

By Pier Giuseppe Accornero



From Tierra del Fuego to the Vatican

SALESIANS in the world

“An arid point turning southward, between the Pacific and the Atlantic, at the end of the American Continent - That is Patagonia. ‘Recoasted’ on the west by the Cordillera of the Andes, and lapped on the east by the Atlantic, open on the north to an uncertain way that links it to the Argentinian Pampa, and restlessly hit by the wind”. This is how an explorer describes

Patagonia, 800 thousand square kilometres – twice the dimension of Italy – where arrived in 1879 the Salesian brothers and the Salesian sisters sent by Don Bosco: ‘A tableland, an arid plateau’, stormy rivers, imposing mountains, tremendous solitude, icy and implacable wind. On the Bicentenary of Don Bosco’s birth – which was acknowledged by the historical-scientific committee as “an anniversary of national interest” – the Italian Parliament, on 18th November 2014, paid a tribute to the great saint from Piedmont with a celebration in the Aldo Moro hall, with the greeting of the Speaker Laura Boldrini and with the congress on “Italians at the end of the world: Salesian Missionaries, Pioneers in Patagonia and in Tierra del Fuego”.



First of All, Human Formation

On 11th November, 1875, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, Don Bosco blesses the first mis-



sionary expedition, headed by Fr. Giovanni Cagliero comprising five other priests and four lay brothers, among whom was Giuseppe Fagnano a former soldier of Garibaldi with the spirit of a pioneer. Don Bosco told them of the painful condition of many Italian families. "You will find a great number of children and also of adults who live in the most deplorable condition of ignorance of reading, writing and of every religious principle. Go, look for these brothers of ours, who were brought by poverty and bad luck to a foreign land". At a later stage they started to evangelize Patagonia: "In this way we commence a great work, not because we believe we can convert the whole world in a few days, not at all. But who knows, this little departure could be like a mustard seed that gradually spreads and produces great good". With great emotion, the ten missionaries walked through the Basilica, welcomed by a great crowd, while coaches and lanterns illumined the night. They carried a leaflet with the 'special mementos' written by Don Bosco: "Seek souls, but not money, honors, or rank. Take special care of the sick, of the children, of the aged, and of the poor, and you will win for yourselves the blessings of God and the good will of people. Let the world know that you are poor in clothing, food, dwelling, and you will be rich in the sight of God and you will win people's hearts. Love each other, counsel one another, correct one another, but do not give in to either envy, or resentment; on the contrary, let the good of one be the good of all;

the pain and suffering of one be considered the pain and suffering of all, and let each one try to eliminate, or at least ameliorate them. Amidst toil and suffering never forget that a great reward awaits us in Heaven - Amen." To Fr. Cagliero he writes, "Do everything you can. God will do what we cannot do ourselves. Entrust everything to the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary Help of Christians, and you shall see what miracles are". Don Bosco accompanied them to Genoa, where on 14th November, 1875 they boarded the French liner Savoie.

The First Houses... Great Parents of the Pope...

In Buenos Aires and in Argentina migrants from Italy and Piedmont abound. In 1877 the Salesians in Barrio Almagro inaugurated the parish Church, vocational schools, and the oratory. In 1908 the football team of San Lorenzo de Almagro was born, after the name of the founder, the Salesian priest Lorenzo Massa. The paternal grand parents and the father of Pope Bergoglio, who emigrated from Turin and Portacomaro, arrived on 15th February, 1929. In Buenos Aires they attended the parish of Barrio Flores, but their heart was at the oratory of Almagro and they were supporters of the red-blue coloured team. Jorge Mario was a great fan: whenever he could, he went to the stadium to meet them, and in 2008, on the centenary, the Cardinal Archbishop of Buenos Aires was given an honorary membership card. ■

By Anand Thanad

Building with the spirituality of Don Bosco

Simplicity with true love is the way of life that God desires from all of us. Jesus gave us an example of living this way and shows us how to follow him. Only the true Spirituality of Love can push us forward in our service, thus overcoming all the difficulties and hardships we encounter in daily in life.

The urgencies of the Gospel require many missionaries to live far away from the land where they are born and grow, sometimes even without the possibility of ever returning. One of these missionaries is a priest from Belgium, Fr. Albert Lucien Gustave Roosens, who has turned 89 – still witnessing to the freshness of the Gospel. Fr. Albert was ordained as a Salesian priest in 1956 after which he left for Thailand to work as a missionary, where the state religion is Buddhism.

His life has been replete with miracles, thanks to the help of God. Fr. Albert recounted to us about the time when he was the only missionary who worked in the South of Thailand, which at the time comprised the provinces of Pattani, Narathiwat, Yala, Surathani and numerous other neighboring provinces. It was not easy to evangelize in those places as it was difficult for them to accept the basic concepts of a religion other than their own. He also had to take into account many children who were unable to attend school for two main reasons: poverty and the distance from home to school. Fr. Roosens decided to build a technical school based on the same fundamental ideals of Don Bosco Technical School in Bangkok. He himself planned and followed the construction of the school building. But that was only the first one. Soon others followed brick upon brick, just the way he wanted them.

These technical schools were built for the young, the orphans from poor families as they could not afford the money to pay for their education. The main scope

of this type of schools is to teach the students to become industrial technicians, mechanical plant operators, welders, mechanical engineers, as well as electrical and electronic engineers. Fr. Roosens believes that this is the right way to reduce poverty which is by helping young men acquire knowledge in a specific profession that they may earn and help their own families.

Apart from these schools, he also did many other construction works such as a compound for a kindergarten and an elementary school, a structure for the continuation of compulsory education called the Don Bosco Vocational Training Center meant for the children whose parents suffer from leprosy. These children are thus enabled to learn a trade and earn a living. Fr. Roosens also built many houses for the poor who used to migrate from North-Eastern Thailand to the South. He was also involved in many projects of sensitization of the villagers on ameliorating the living conditions, particularly by improving sanitation and providing running water, even in the remotest villages. To these, we must also add an Aid Center for the past pupils of Don Bosco School who are blind and are unable to live autonomously, and the construction of another vocational school in Pattani Province, and many more. As Fr. Roosens himself often says, “there are many untold stories”.

Naturally, to implement and carry out all these projects requires great financial support. Fr. Roosens would say that every time he began the construction of a new school, he was never sure whether he would be able to complete the project as there were many problems to handle. He would continue the story, his eyes brimming with tears, “I always prayed constantly, and God never abandoned me”. One day a benefactor came to me and told me that I could use his money in whatever way I deemed necessary. I was very surprised at this gesture: God had sent me that man; it was a miracle. Many other

times I received donations from people I never met before. He would say, "God always guided me to the right people from whom we could get help, showing me the right way to follow and fulfill his mission. God is great. I blindly believe in Him because He is my shepherd."

Fr. Roosens loves to construct buildings. During his life he has built at least 35 new buildings, thus being nicknamed "Bob the Builder", (after the name of a famous local cartoon). He built schools and churches and he is already planning to build four more. He says, "I never thought of how many buildings I could have built, because my only concern is to help the poor and the needy".



He received three different awards from King Baudouin of Belgium, in the years 1971, 1983 and 1986, and in December 2013 he received from the Vatican the medal 'Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice' for his years of service in favor of the Church and the welfare of humankind. When asked what he feels about all these awards, he replied, "These medals did not certainly fulfill my wish to help my neighbor; they are only a demonstration that these constructions certainly could not come out of nothing. They are the result of a passion and love for one's neighbor, which is true especially in the case of us priests and religious".

Fr Roosens is now busy collecting stamps and taking care of his latest project, the "Don Bosco Home" and the chapel of "Our Lady of Banneux, Belgium", which has always been his great dream. The construction of "Don Bosco Home" which has already begun is intended to host poor children coming from the rural areas of Thailand who wish to pursue their studies in Bangkok, having no finance to pay the fees and house rent. This new four-story construction comprises of bedrooms,

recreational rooms, meeting rooms surrounded by playgrounds. In this complex, as per the dream of Fr. Roosens, a chapel dedicated to "Our Lady of Banneux" is still under construction.

Three years ago, when Fr Roosens was 86 he went to Belgium to raise funds for this new project. He narrated that each day he had to drive to various places to visit friends and benefactors who had assisted him in the past. When asked how he could remember the various streets, as it was more than 50 years that he had set his foot in his own country, he answered, "It is very simple. I pray the rosary and drive. Well often when I lost the way, with the help of the people I used to return home

safe and sound!" Then he added, "This is for sure, my last trip to Belgium." He is a very determined and stubborn person, which he himself admits. Since he suffers from heart problems when asked about this distant trip he said, "Everything went on well with the help of so many good-hearted people".

During an interview when asked whether he feels homesick, he said that he had not gone home even for his parents' funeral. "I was in the South of Thailand, helping the poor, and what could I do for a deceased person? I could only pray for their soul. It is the living, in fact, that needed me," said Fr. Roosens.

When asked, "Fr. Roosens, how can we increase our faith?" he answered, "Believe the impossible!" There are still many unknown anecdotes around Fr Roosens.

Throughout his life as a religious he always exuded great joy, knowing that he was at the service of God. The motto that he always cherishes is "*The Lord is my Shepherd, there is nothing I shall want*". ■



Ecclesial spirituality





“Everyday Spirituality”

Father Arthur Lenti is known throughout the Salesian world, especially because of the success of and the good reception accorded to his multi-volume biographical survey entitled, *Don Bosco: History and Spirit*, now translated into several languages. Born, like Don Bosco, in the region of Piedmont (Italy), in 1939, Fr. Arthur migrated to United States where he joined the Salesian Society. After World War II he returned to Italy to pursue theological studies prior to his ordination. Later he was graduated from the Biblical Institute in Rome.

Since 1975 Fr. Arthur has resided at “Don Bosco Hall” established at Berkeley, California (United States) and housing Salesian theological students attending the Graduate Theological Schools. For a number of years he filled the post of student advisor. Known for his simple life-style, courteous manners, and readiness



to be of service, he has enjoyed the appreciation and affection of the Don Bosco Hall Salesian community that has been his home over these many years.

Eventually, as necessity dictated, and at his superior's bidding, Father Arthur returned to Rome and took up Salesian Studies earnestly and diligently, with emphasis on Don Bosco's history and spirituality in the context of the nineteenth century Church and society. It was thus that an Institute of Salesian Studies was established at “Don Bosco Hall,” with affiliation to the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology. Father Arthur graciously consented to spend some



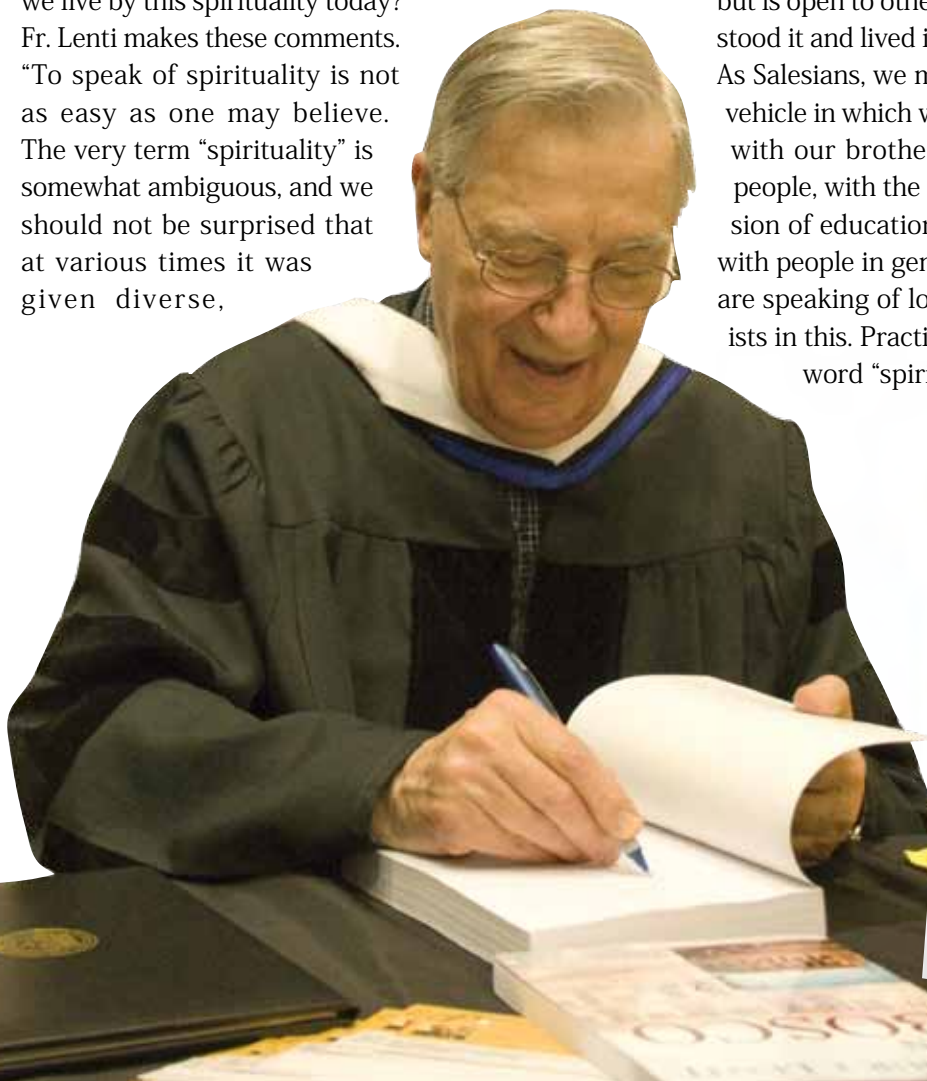
time with us in familiar dialogue on Salesian spirituality as lived “day-to-day”. Our conversation dwelt on two basic points:

(1) “How do we understand a daily spirituality in relationship to the Salesian charism?” and (2) “How can we live by this spirituality today?”

Fr. Lenti makes these comments. “To speak of spirituality is not as easy as one may believe. The very term “spirituality” is somewhat ambiguous, and we should not be surprised that at various times it was given diverse,

even contradictory, meanings. We have an example of this when well-meaning, dedicated people speak of spirituality as a purely interior and individual experience of a relationship to the divine. On the contrary, spirituality, to be authentic, cannot exist in isolation but is open to other people, even as Don Bosco understood it and lived it.

As Salesians, we may understand “spirituality” as the vehicle in which we move and enter into relationship with our brothers in community, with our young people, with the persons that share with us the mission of education-evangelization of the young, and with people in general. Inclusively and essentially we are speaking of love or charity. We must not be elitists in this. Practically speaking, we may replace the word “spirituality” with other terms that may





better express what we mean. We could, for example, use terms like love, charity, friendship, desire to help, availability to others, etc. Taken together, these terms may aptly describe the “spirituality of the quotidian,” as Don Bosco understood it.

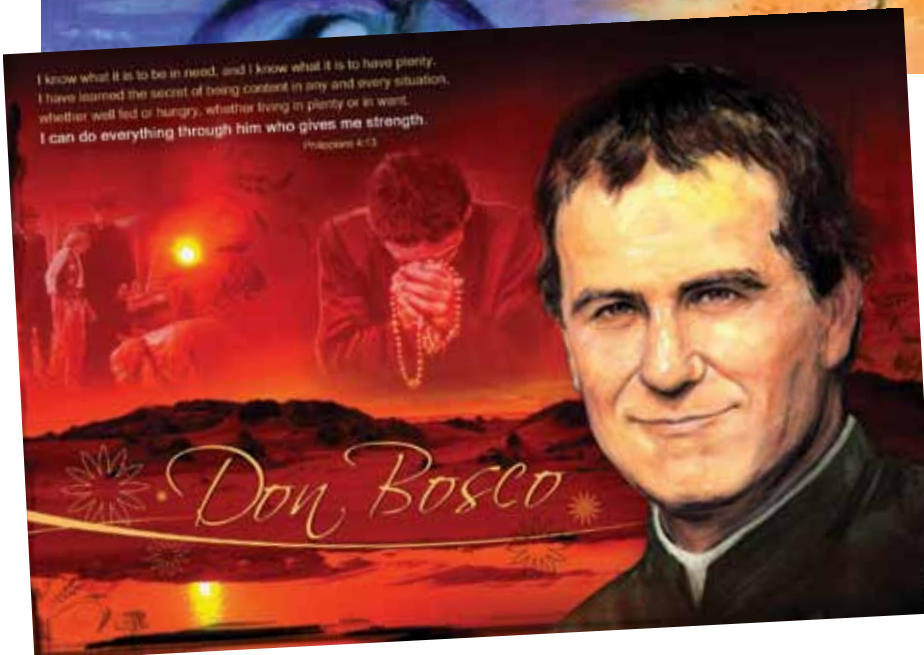
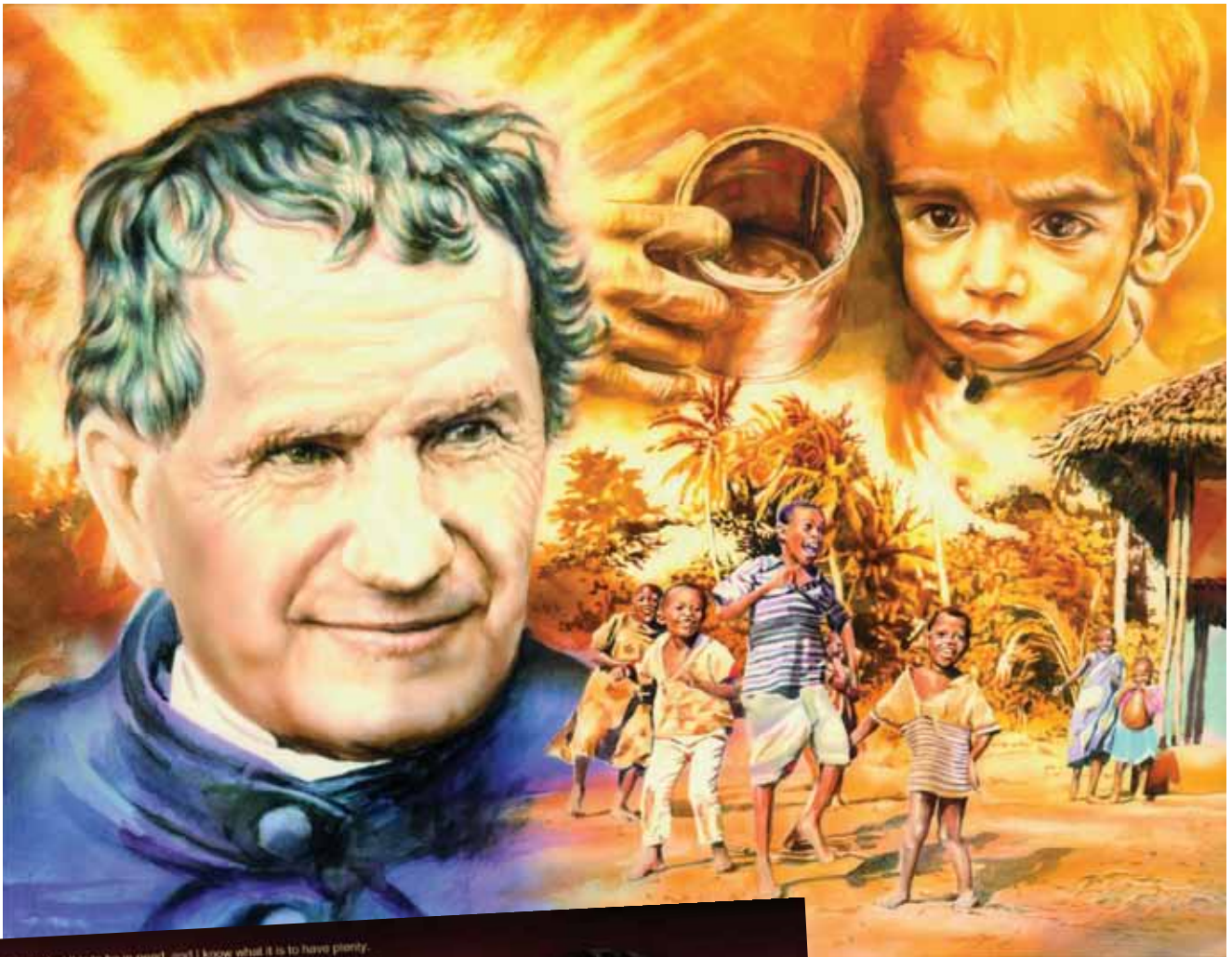
It is this very aspect that best reveals the influence of St. Francis de Sales on Don Bosco. It is practically certain that Don Bosco was well acquainted with the *Introduction to the Devout Life* (*Philothea*), the masterly work of the holy Bishop of Geneva. In this book we discover the taproot of the “spirituality of the quotidian” — the spirituality that Don Bosco lived by and taught.

We are thereby reminded that Don Bosco lived as a mystic, that is to say, in overarching union with God, with the saints, especially with the Virgin Mary, with whom he conversed with authentic familiarity. Moreover, he understood mystic life as a life that one lived in practical Christian love fully engaged in Christian ministry and lived not merely as humanitarian phi-

lanthropy but out of a deeply rooted union with God. Hence it is possible to equate the term Christian spirituality with Christian love or charity. This is better understood when we recall, for example, that occasional visitors to Don Bosco’s Oratory would be amazed and struck at the supernatural aura that one could literally breathe. Such a sensation was the result not only to the intense sacramental life, religious celebrations, and devotional practices—but also, and above all, to the Christian love that motivated the lives of mere adolescents and pre-adolescents to such a high degree that was simply “supernatural.”

At the centre of it all stood Don Bosco, whose relationship to God shone as a beacon that shed light on all those who gathered around him.

Now then, let us not forget that, on principle, spirituality is not the preserve of an elite. The Second Vatican Council understood and promoted it. Spirituality is not only for bishops, priests, and religious; on the contrary, it is for everyone. This means that



all the members of the Salesian Family are called to live this kind of spirituality. Don Bosco expects that each one of us be ready and available for the work of charity. Within the Salesian Family this is a task for all without exception or class privilege. This is not mere work, but it is work of charity. The Salesian Family is

not a “social club” but a family that unites us for the apostolate and working for the salvation of young people. In other words, what unites us and sets us apart from other religious families is our spirituality and not just our external work or apostolate.

In this sense, our spirituality does not keep timetables, but is lived daily especially in the way we relate with other people. Consequently we must be careful with the words we use, and with the

manner we treat other people. In this regard, respect for others and their way of doing things is very important. These small details might appear insignificant, but insignificant they are not, for they express our interior dispositions, and are authentic signs of a well-lived Christian (and Salesian) spirituality”. ■

“It is to the glory
of my Father
that you should bear much
fruit and then you
will be my disciples”
(Jn 15:8).



Venerable Fr. Augustus Arribat

(1879-1963), a French Salesian, was a good father to all his children. His life is an embodiment of the Gospel when it says: “I did not come to be served but to serve.” He never refused any kind of work, and in fact sought the most humble services. Due to his availability for cleaning, the novices used to call him “The knight with the broom”. He would watch over the sick throughout

the night. During the war he gave visiting confreres his room and his bed and himself would spend the night on a couch or in the chapel. Called “The saint of the valley”, some miraculous healings are attributed to him.

In all his responsibilities of management, especially as Rector of various Houses over the years, Father Arribat was always the exemplary Salesian: always amongst

his young pupils, in the playground or the chapel, at catechism, in the infirmary; he went from dining room to dormitory, from the confessional to the garden, ever attentive to everything and everyone. He had an extraordinary respect and gentleness for everyone, especially the little ones and the poor. He watched over the House and was thought of as a lightning conductor, like a new St Joseph. He was transparent and smiling, this son of Don Bosco who would not ignore anyone. His thin and ascetic frame reminded one of the Cure d'Ars, while his kindness and smile were worthy of St Francis de Sales.



Servant of God Fr. Charles Braga

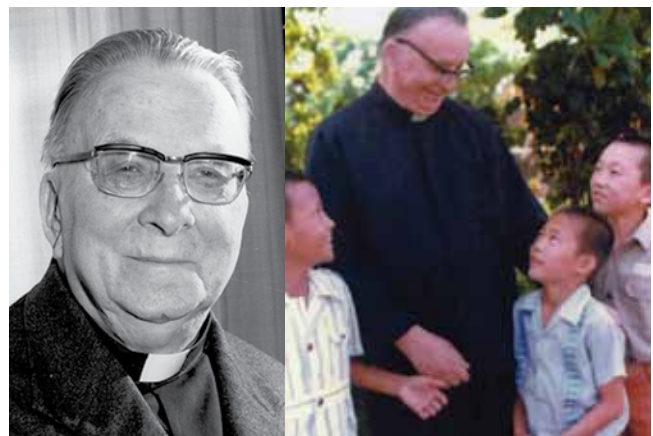
(1889-1971), when he lost his mother, was entrusted to the Salesian Sisters at Tirano and the Salesians in Sondrio. When the First World War broke out he was recruited into the army. He made a request to be sent to the Far East. He came to Shiu Chow, in southern China and helped Bishop Versiglia, the first Salesian Martyr. In 1930 he was made Provincial in China, and gave considerable development to Salesian missionary work. He founded the first Salesian school in Beijing, bringing Don Bosco's dream to fruition. But Salesian work, in full expansion, was dramatically interrupted by Communism. Fr. Braga then turned his attention to the Philippines where he set up a Salesian presence. In 1955 he was appointed as Provincial. He died at Bacolor on 3rd January, 1971.

Deeply optimistic, fatherliness and cheerfulness were Fr. Braga's outstanding characteristics. Wherever he went, he fostered a wonderful family spirit. His own family history was marked by suffering: his father's

disappearance and his mother's illness; but that was what led him to defend, support and promote the family. He gave flesh to Don Bosco's preventive system in China and the Philippines, especially by exercising loving kindness and fatherliness. He brought Don Bosco's charismatic and educational legacy to other times and places. The commitment and missionary zeal, which marked his life, recall the missionary dimension that ought to always accompany the life of every Christian community to make it fruitful and Gospel-like.

The life of *Servant of God, Fr. Andrej Majcen* (1904-1999), was one of constant change under the Communist regimes in China, Vietnam and former Yugoslavia. His joyful spirit, ability to work with others, his ability to 'plant' Don Bosco in Chinese soil, to found the Salesian presence in Vietnam, to foster mission animation in his country of origin, Slovenia, are the distinctive characteristics of this Salesian missionary.

All that intense activity was leavened by Gospel wisdom and discernment: reflections and meditations can be found in his diaries (more than 6,000 handwritten pages), his daily and careful examination of conscience. They reveal his profoundly Christian and religious existence, and personal commitment to spiritual growth.



"Witness to kindness": in his long and fruitful life, he was a sign and bearer of God's love. He drew his pastoral love from the Heart of Christ, marked as it was by great apostolic zeal and predilection for the young, a witness to God's tenderness in word and especially in deed and in the exercise of Salesian loving kindness. ■



by Pierluigi Cameroni, Spiritual Animator

Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA)

Greets the New Rector Major

Members of ADMA “are part of the Salesian Family because of the Salesian devotion to Mary Help of Christians, as instituted by Don Bosco himself. This feeling of belonging means a commitment to honour Mary, Mother and Helper of the Church, by participating in the young and popular mission of Don Bosco, especially in developing and defending the Christian faith among the people. Within the Salesian Family the association emphasizes the peculiar value of the popular devotion to Mary as a means of evangelization and promotion of the working class and the youth in need. It acknowledges the Rector Major, Don Bosco’s successor, as father and centre of the entire Family (Art. 3 of the Regulations).

ADMA in the Philippines

Fr. Nestor Impelido, Salesian and spiritual Animator of ADMA in North Philippines, presents ADMA in the Philippines.

The History of ADMA in the Philippines

The first promoter was Msgr. Guglielmo Piani, Salesian and Apostolic Delegate in the Philippines from 1922 to 1948. He spread the devotion to Mary Help of Christians wherever he went. He succeeded in proclaiming Mary Help of Christians as the second Patron Saint of the Philippines. The first ADMA group was founded in a church run by the Franciscans, close to the centre of Manila, where there was the first statue of Mary Help Christians that is now placed in the sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians of Parafiache. Another group, promoted by a confrère coming from Hong Kong, Fr. Patrick Rayan, is to be found in the city of Cebu. This Salesian also founded a group in the city of Manila (Makati), comprising of high-class people, which still exists. The devotion to Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco spread all over the country thanks to the Salesians and the



Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, in particular through the promotion of her Novena.

The Present Strength of ADMA

At present in the Philippines there are 35 groups with around 1000 members, with two councils linked to the two Salesian Provinces of the North and the South. The current significance of the devotion to Mary Help of Christians manifests itself in countering emergent secularism, which is sustained by the government policy, and in responding to the educate emergency, widely spread in the country.

The Role of Lay Persons in Promoting the Association

Not only Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were the promoters of devotion to Mary Help of Christians, but also many lay persons. For instance, one of our members promoted as many as six groups. What qualifies ADMA as a group of the Salesian Family is the presence of youth and the participation of families in ADMA, as shown in the International Congress of Czestochowa in 2011. In Salesian houses there are groups called Auxilium, an expression of Youth ADMA. These groups in parishes are in charge of animating the singing and the liturgy, of the teaching of catechesis, and of various forms of charity to and solidarity with those in need.



The Most Significant Meetings

The National Congress of ADMA both in the North and the South, the annual meetings of the Salesian Family in the month of February, the Week of Spirituality of the Salesian Family, the monthly meeting of the National Council, the spiritual retreat in preparation for Christmas, the anniversary of the foundation of ADMA in the month of April, each 24th of the month, preceded by a novena, and the solemn feast on May 24.

The Challenges of the Association

The greatest challenges are the integration and involvement of ADMA among the youth and the families. Besides, the Salesians who know ADMA and promote the devotion to Mary Help of Christians must rekindle this apostolic fire and participate in the meetings of the Salesian Family, to share the Salesian spirit and mission. ■





This is Why I Love Him

A Don Bosco Volunteer Presents
her Man and the Reason for her Choice

It is now several years that I love him. Despite some features of his, I fell in love with him day by day, to the point of deciding to follow him definitively, though continuing to live my life, my work, to stay among people and, something even stranger, without revealing to anybody (at least officially) my bond with him! He is a man who goes with strange companies, and yet all have a place in his heart. For them, he would do anything, even give his own life. When he has some free time, he asks to go to the house of thieves (Lk 19:1-6), he even lets a prostitute wash his feet (Lk 7:36-39). Not to mention his lapses of memory: it is enough for him that a thief, who stole throughout his life, asks for his mercy and he takes him home with him (Lk 23:43). This “very short memory” fascinates me. He forgets all the times I am unfaithful to him, when I forget him so much as I am absorbed in my work and in my way of living in the world, with all the problems it implies! He is not a rational man: once he



told me of a friend of his who had ten drachmas and who lost one, and she turned the house upside down until she found it and then, to celebrate, she organized a great feast (Lk 15:8-10) in which he took part! On another occasion, using his medical skills, he healed ten persons, but only one came back to thank him (Lk 17:11-19). But to him one has the value of ten.

Not “for what” but “for whom”

He is the engine of my actions, the horizon toward whom I move. When every morning I get ready to begin my day, I realize that the only answer to the question “why, what for?” is not enough for me; but if I ask myself “for whom?”, i.e. for him, the perspective changes. And yet, he is not a great suitor! When he knew I was falling in love with him, when I was considering whether to spend all my life with him, instead of tickling me with attracting proposals, he told me: If you want to come after me, renounce yourself, take up your cross and follow me! (Mt 16:21-27). How can you court a person like him? And yet, he managed to fascinate me, to make me understand that the small or big crosses he proposed me to carry were made for me, to put me to the test, and – an important detail – whenever I managed to embrace my cross, he was there! Every day there are some crosses, but the perspective, not at all easy, to embrace them and to find him there waiting for me, gradually led me to live another form of obedience to the cross, which is not suffering, but a path to purification. And many a time did I perceive his extraordinary love for me: he made me feel unique! He made me feel how precious I was for him, leaving everything to come and look for me whenever I abandoned my way. And when we have to make accounts, I also realized that with him, with the love he puts in doing it, accounts are always ok. Zacchaeus, one of his strange friends, had the bad habit of stealing, but when he returns a double amount, I do not know how, on the receipt I find written that it is worth four times as much! When I ask him something, I know that if it is for my good, he is not stingy. Sometimes he wants me to pray, and very much too! But I never manage to repay his.

A Credit Card with a letter-code pin

Because of this, the dimension of prayer has become part of my daily round, acquiring a privileged place among the many activities and things to do, a prayer done in many facets: the prayer of the Church, but also the simple prayer of entrusting to him a meeting with a person, or a complicated situation of life. Then I found out the way of using his “credit card”: it has a very peculiar PIN: no numbers, only letters! Your will be done! And to my great satisfaction I dis-

cover that he often lets me draw from his account much more than I thought. The man I love did many jobs, even if in some of them he was not so lucky. He tried to be minister of economy, but he nearly brought the system to bankruptcy. For instance, he pays all in the same way, and when he pays salaries, everybody is somehow unhappy because all of them receive the same amount (Mt 20:1-16). His generosity does not allow him to calculate whether one has done more or less: we are all equal to him. Perhaps reading these lines, some reader will wonder who he is and who I am. Well... he is He, Jesus. I am a DBV, a Don Bosco Volunteer, a secular consecrated Salesian. That is, I chose to consecrate my life to God, by continuing to live in the world in Salesian style - a consecration made more profound with the seal that we receive at the moment of our baptism. After a long period of discernment, I decided to pronounce the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience in the Institute of Don Bosco Volunteers. For the rest, I continue to live my life in the world, without a religious habit. I have a job, many friends, a house. I could be the lady seated at your side at this moment in the bus, or the one who lines up at the store or at the post office. I only wish that my way of living and of relating to others, be something that arouses some questions in others, like, “Do you have anything special which I do not grasp?” -. How did I make this choice? Well, if you do not mind, I shall tell you in the next issue. ■





By Jorge García M.



Living Water

“Thirsty Women”

LIVING WATER is a movement which brings together women who are looking for education for life. They are members of God’s People: responsible, married—mothers of families, caught up in the normal concerns of a family, without time or space for stopping to reflect over-much on the meaning of life. They are carried forward by the tide of daily life and focus all their attention on staying afloat.

However, they all have and feel the need for something that can fill their souls and make them aware of their dignity, their value as individuals, and the transcendent nature of their lives. Many of them have never had a complete basic education at school. They have received no spiritual formation. They go through life with what they have been able to grasp from religious practice, images, prayers, devotion to some Marian title or the saints. In simple terms they

are thirsty for something which they can then recognise as being of God.

“I recall,” says Silvia, “meeting up with a friend, and at a certain moment she told me ‘I’m going to my group’, and that made me curious to find out what she meant. Some ten of us women were invited and we came along to the famous group. Now I can say that I have found what I was looking for here. I always felt the need for “something” and I got that from my first day.” Norma too was invited to the group but she didn’t like it. However she had the terrible experience of being on the brink of death through illness. “I was also looking for something... Was it God? And an angel in the form of a friend came and invited me to the group.” Susana tells us that when she was invited she thought it was just one of those many ‘hens groups’ for gossip, fun and wasting time. “When I began listening to Fr. Chavo (Salesian Father Salvador Horacio Pérez) I said:



‘This is for me’; up till now nobody has helped guide me through life.”

Many have found God through strong experiences of weakness or infirmity, problems and pain, inner emptiness, loneliness or abandonment, beginning from a situation where there was no room for God. “Spiritually, there was nothing in my life; I had lost faith since I got married, I took God off and put my husband on the altar instead. I considered it was all down to fate and had no need of God.”

Living Water is an appropriate movement for situations like these of normal women who have little social relevance nor wealth that would make them stand out from the common folk or allow them to find room for personal growth and formation. But in truth it is the ordinary folk who support the life of society. They may not be given much attention but they are capable of developing their capabilities and surprising human and spiritual skills.

“In Living Water I found God, and this is wonderful because it helps me to live with dignity. Now I have answers for so many of my ‘Whys’. Even though I am

a sinner I learn something about Him every day, and Mary is my mother and my strength.”

“God has regained first place in my life, now He is the first and only One. I came to know Him through his Word. He is always there when I need Him, whereas my husband, at a certain moment when I needed him most, was not.”

“My teenage daughter asked me: “Who do you love most?” And I told her: “God! And I love Him above everything else.” Now I want my husband and my children to know God and my apostolate consists in directing people towards God and that is why I want to know Him better.”

“I see that I am changing, and my daughters too are changing a little; this gives me energy and happiness. Living Water nourishes me and I am getting ready to serve my Parish.”

Living Water came out of the concern of a Salesian priest in the Guadalajara Province, Mexico. It is about women, wives and mothers of families who are finding their way through life without support or formation, without any guide for their considerable needs and things they lack. Father Salvador Horacio Pérez, more commonly known as Fr. Chavo, led the movement which has dozens of groups around various cities. Despite his death in 2012, Living Water still has life and moves forward with a firm plan responding to the fundamental human and spiritual needs of these people. They remember him with affection and devotion. He gave life to people who needed it! Life! ■





Youth Evangelising Youth

The Salesian Youth Movement in America and the Caribbean



SINCE 1988, THE SALESIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT HAS INCREASINGLY BECOME A LIVING REALITY INVOLVING THOUSANDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD.



For the World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro in June 2013, the Salesian Youth Movement (SYM) had received a wonderful period of preparation. It has already become a tradition that for each WYD a special day is chosen where Delegates, leaders and SYM members come together along with the Rector Major of the Salesians and the Mother General of the Salesian Sisters.

Born after a Salesian youth camp at Santiago in Chile thirty years back (1974), the SYM then became a worldwide organisation at the centenary of Don Bosco's death (1988). He was the founder and father of the Salesian Family. Don Bosco's passion for education

led him over time to plan a *broad movement of charity energised by Salesian spirituality*; in this way too he sought to give continuity to the evangelising program of his pastoral service at the Oratory in Valdocco (Turin, Italy). Proof of this, amongst other things, are the various kinds of youth associations which arose and which Don Bosco called "Sodalities"; he considered them to be "the work of the young people themselves." Given the pastoral renewal that came about through Vatican Council II in the Church, in the 1970s the Salesians and Salesian Sisters relaunched Don Bosco's "preventive system", looking for new ways of expressing this pedagogical practice which, based as it is



quality in new areas of socialisation which are part of young people's lives today. This is a movement "of the young for the young" who share a spirituality and a form of communication which ensures that common values and messages circulate amongst them. The SYM brings together young people who may be very different in themselves, from those who are quite some distance from faith, to those for whom spirituality is a seed which may grow, and also those who in an explicit and aware form are involved in apostolic commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The distinct purpose of the Movement is to form good Christians and upright citizens as apostles of the young, at the school of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello. The SYM America Festival 2013 took place from 18-21 July 2013. It was the first time for the SYM in the Americas and the Caribbean to come together, and its aim was to strengthen its identity as the presence of Salesian youth in the Church in each country. It encour-

on the Gospel, develops amongst the young through reason and loving kindness. The birth of new youth groups and associations prepared the ground for drawing up a broader view of the youth movement which, inspired by Salesian spirituality and in communion with the Church, can be at the service of many more young people.

Thus the SYM today is made up of youth groups and associations that recognise themselves in Salesian spirituality and pedagogy; they keep their own organisational and practical autonomy, as part of this plurality of groups, and have a varied educational presence of



Salesian Heart

Biographical Sketch of Xiomara
Hernández González

CUBA



By Alejandro Satorre Morales





XIONARA BEGAN TO FOLLOW JESUS, IN HIGH SCHOOL
WHEN COMMUNISM PREVAILED IN CUBA.



Mary's humility, Francis of Assisi's simplicity and John Bosco's capacity for work could perfectly describe this woman of the people and the Church, by way of sketching out her life and by way of frank recognition, almost contrary to any wish of hers. A Salesian heart beats in Xiomara (at times a little nervously).

Her personality was forged in the warmth of a family country home and from the example of her widowed mother with four children. "When my mother found herself alone she decided to move to Camajuani, then to Santa Clara. She had to wash and iron to keep us, it was the only thing she could do. That's how she raised us and educated us". The seed of her faith also came from her good mother who trusted in God's power and in the Virgin of Charity... even if it was a touch syncretistic".

She was baptised as a child and already in Santa Clara "... I began going to a house nearby where they were teaching Christian doctrine in preparation for Communion. I remember the catechists, two very large but very fine women who came from the La Pastora parish. One Holy Thursday, I don't recall the year, I made my First Communion".

But maybe it was the years at High School where she committed herself forever to Jesus, under the guidance of the principal, who was preparing the girls for the sacraments of Christian initiation. She came

to Our Lady of Mt Carmel Church (she was 12 or 13 years old) where she got to know the Servant of God Fr José Vandor, went to Confession to him and chose him as her spiritual director until he died in 1979. Her commitment grew and at the Chapel of St Anne where she used to attend, "I approached some of the young girls and told them I wanted to do more than just go to Mass; I began Young Catholic Action".

Her 'more' could have led her to being a Sister, but at that time she did not know how, and besides, it seemed that God did not want that... And so if she has been faithful to her Church and authentic in her values, it is partly because of her happy marriage to José Gálvez (another Salesian heart), even without the five or six children she really wanted to have, "... this was a huge frustration, but by God's grace I managed to overcome it." Amongst her best memories – she says – are "when I knew love for the first time, «Pepe»; the very special stage in my life when I married, and when I saw Pepe ordained as a Permanent Deacon".

She was married in the Church of Our Lady of Carmel in November 1965, a parish she had attended for

many years. "We spent more than 50 years with the Salesian Family of Mt Carmel (she is a Salesian Cooperator), and I thank God for having given me this vocation and allowing me to belong to this wonderful home. It was here that I came to know such good people: Cheo and Nelita, Amada and Yiyo, María del Carmen and Juan Carlos, Ileana and Campito, Mirita and Pirolo, Alemán and Marité; Salesian Sisters Flami, Lina, Severina, Lupita; Salesians Ballari, Cantello, Linares, Soto, Adrián, Héctor, Alex, Guillermo; we are a wonderful family. If you want to know who influenced me most: Fathers Vandor, Bruno and Giordano. I also very much recall Bishop Fernando Prego, Bishop of Santa Clara and my mother, who were my examples of courage and faith".

In charge of the marriage group, member of the choir, parish treasurer ("since Fr Vandor until today all the priests in the parish have had trust in me"), in charge of Prison Ministry, the elderly group; she is the true and driving engine of the parish, a Caritas animator, extraordinary minister of the Eucharist, visitor to the sick, the one who distributes the diocesan magazine





“Amanecer”; “...I have felt fulfilled in all my apostolates, but without doubt if I had to choose one it would be that of catechist... I always tell the kids, teenagers and older youth to live in accordance with their Christian faith. I have never neglected this task even in my work, in the local area, not even at the most difficult times...” Here is the essence of her Salesianity. For Xiomara, it is not enough to pray to the good God for poor and abandoned young people, or pray for vocations to the priesthood and pray for the sick, but her works testify to a Christ-centred, Mary-centred spirituality that is cheerful, daily, responsible service and deep ecclesial communion, a practice she sums up in St Paul’s words: “my favourite line is: «Woe to me if I do not evangelise».”

Her wrinkles carry the indelible marks of the Church’s life in Cuba: “I took part in the first Catholic National Congress, the Cuban Church’s Reflection (in the

1980s), in both Papal visits”; and she has borne the ups and downs of the nation without criticism or complaint, perhaps because she always had high regard for St Francis de Sales’ words: “you can catch more flies with a drop of honey than a barrelful of vinegar”.

Such is the woman that has never lost her pure smile, who weeps every Good Friday when she hears of the way Jesus was treated, and it gives you goose-bumps just to imagine that her favourite melody is Psalm 23; she who has faced up to the death of her nephews abroad and trembles every time she goes to hospital, she who also has the gift of the gab (“I have always been very nervous”).

And she will continue until the end of her days this way, because her idea of happiness is that “... to have God in your heart, is to be at peace with oneself and with others”. ■



Like Don Bosco with the Young, for the Young

In the Strenna 2015 the Rector Major underscores
the modernity of the educative proposal of Don Bosco
two hundred years from his birth

By Lorenzo Bortolin



THE SALESIAN CHARISM IS BEING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE,
MEETING THEM IN THEIR DAILY LIVES, LEARNING ABOUT
THEIR WORLD AND LOVING THEM.



DON BOSCO GOT INVOLVED IN THE PLAN OF GOD,
DUE TO WHICH HE LOVED THE YOUNG
IN WHATEVER CONDITION.



The Strenna that the Rector Major, Fr. Angel Fernàndez Artime, the tenth successor of Don Bosco, proposed for the year 2015, underscores that the Salesian charism is at the service of evangelizing communion and is addressed in particular to the young. He recalls, first of all, that “from the first years of the Oratory, towards the end of the year, Don Bosco had begun to give a strenna/motto to all his boys in general, and another to each one individually. The first one, the general one, used to consist in recommending certain forms of behavior and some things for them to remember so that the new year about to start would go well”. After him, his successors continued the tradition. For Fr. Artime, “It is a distinguishing feature of our Salesian Family that in the first place it is a charismatic family in which the Primacy of God-Communion is the heart of Salesian mysticism. In this communion we recognize the diversity and at the same time the unity that has its origin in baptismal consecration, in sharing the Spirit of Don Bosco and in participation in the Salesian mission at the service of the young, especially the poorest”. Therefore, the aim of the Strenna is “to be a message that builds up unity and communion for the whole Salesian Family in a common objective”.

For All Men and Women

The Salesian Charism “includes and has a place for everyone” but has a particular attention to the young. For Don Bosco, Because he felt that he was a part of the plan of God, this pastoral charity meant loving young people whatever might be their condition or circumstances, in order to lead them to the fullness of that human life that was found in the Lord Jesus and which took practical form in the possibility of living as an upright citizen and a child of God. This is the key to our existence, our living and putting into practice the Salesian charism. If each one of us can come to feel in our very being, in the depth of our being that same fire, that passion for education that Don Bosco had, meeting each young person at a deeply personal level, believing in each individual, convinced that in each one there is always a seed of goodness and of the Kingdom in order to help them to give the very best of themselves and to draw them to a close encounter with the Lord Jesus, then we shall certainly embody in our lives the best of the Salesian charism.” For the Rector Major “Salesian charism is not our property, neither of the Salesians, not even of the entire Salesian Family”, but of the



IT IS THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WILL SAVE US, BECAUSE THEY MAKE US GO OUT OF OUR ROUTINE, OUR FEARS AND OUR INERTIA.



whole Church. It is certainly one of those gifts with which the Holy Spirit enriched the Church, so that, with eyes fixed on the essence of the Gospel, and in ecclesial communion first, and then within the Salesian Family, we can be a precious gift to the Young. Because of this, the Gospel, a pastoral heart for the young and communion are for us, the Family of Don Bosco, the Salesian Family, a guarantee of Identity and Fidelity”.

Being with the Young

As a consequence, “the Salesian charism is by our BEING WITH THE YOUNG, being with them and among them, being in contact with them in their daily lives, knowing their world, loving their world, encouraging them to be the protagonists in their own lives, reawakening their sense of God, helping them to live with high aims, to live their lives as the Lord Jesus

did.” Because of this, we must “look for their good, committing all our energies, all the breath and the strength we have”. Fr. Arttime remarks that “when Pope Francis talks about going to the peripheries, he is challenging us in a very real and direct way because he is asking us to be present on the peripheries with the young who are there, cut off from almost everything, excluded and without opportunities. At the same time I want to say that, as Salesian Family, these peripheries are something typically our own, because the periphery forms an integral part of our Salesian DNA. What was Don Bosco’s Valdocco if not the periphery of a large city? What was Mornese if not a rural periphery? We need to make sure that our examination of conscience as individuals and as Salesian Family sees us facing up to the strong demand from the Church, which in its turn is part of the essential nature of the Gospel. It will be neces-



THE SALESIAN CHARISM BELONGS TO THE WHOLE CHURCH.

IT IS A GIFT FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT TO REMIND US HOW IMPORTANT THE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE FOR GOD.



sary to question ourselves about being with and for the young, especially the last ones... But it will not be necessary to decide where we ought to be going, 'our pole star', because it is among the least, the poorest, those who are most in need of us that the most characteristic feature of our DNA as Salesian charism is to be found".

A Year of Feast

The Rector Major adds, "I dare to say that it is the young, boys and girls and especially the poorest and those most in need who will save us, helping us to emerge from our routine, from our apathy and from our fears. Often we are more concerned with maintaining our own securities than opening our hearts, our ears and our minds to what the Spirit may be asking of us". And this is much more important in the Bicentenary of Don Bosco's birth, "a year of

celebration for the gift that Don Bosco was for the Church and for his Family will not leave us focused on ourselves, self-referential, self-complacent, but will launch us with greater force, if possible, on our mission". Finally, the Rector Major recalls what St. Pope John Paul II wrote in his letter *Juvenum Patris*, on the Centenary of Don Bosco's death, referring to Mary, the most lofty collaborator of the Holy Spirit: To her I entrust you, and with you the whole world of youth, that being attracted, animated and guided by her, they may be able to attain through the mediation of your educative work, the stature of new men for a new world: the world of Christ, Master and Lord." The *Strenna* is a gift of the Rector Major, Successor of Don Bosco and Father of the Salesian Family. Every group belonging to the family, thanks to his message, lives the common Salesian mission at the service of the young, especially the poorest ones. ■

I am waiting for you in paradise

Jac. Giovanni Pisoni

