



INTOUCH

Nov. 23
2011

USA West Province Newsletter • Building Bridges Between Communities



Dear Brother and Sister Salesians:

The Rector Major's first conclusion for the Interamerica Team Visit last month in El Salvador is that our region must return to **Don Bosco, evangelizer of the young**. Last week we reflected on the first part, returning to Don Bosco. This is the theme of next year's strena ("Coming to know and imitate Don Bosco, let us make the young our life's mission") as well of the conferences I am giving this year in the provincial visitations.

Quoting C 34 of our Rule of Life, the Rector Major reminds us that "evangelizing and catechizing are the fundamental characteristics of our mission." To make that a reality, the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ, whether in our lives as Salesians or in our communities or in our ministries, has to be both profound and transparent. Can we say that in Don Bosco West the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ is profound and transparent (evident) in each one of our lives, in each one of our communities, in each one of our ministries? If not, do we have community and pastoral plans to make it so?

We are being challenged to make a leap forward. If in the past we concentrated our efforts on

creating environments, building and maintaining institutions (schools, parishes, clubs, retreat centers, formation houses), today it is necessary to center our efforts on persons, on young persons, on poor persons. It means our priority, a priority profound and transparent, must be the accompaniment of persons in their individual growth towards human maturity and the vocation of being friends, disciples, and apostles of Jesus Christ. The Congregation is entering a process now of "rethinking youth ministry" in order to help us make that leap forward.

One aspect of that "rethinking youth ministry" process (which means of course all of our ministry everywhere in Don Bosco West) is that this apostolic mission is always a shared mission. To return to **Don Bosco, evangelizer of the young** cannot be an individual Salesian's project, but rather the fruit of sharing life as disciples of Jesus, and in the case of the SDB, as brothers "in fraternal and apostolic communities" (title of Chapter 5 of our Rule of Life). Can we say that in Don Bosco West the first testimony we give to those we evangelize is that of a common life and ministry that leads us and the young together to the mystery of communion? Is presence in the playground (the concrete one and virtual one) a profound and transparent witness of all Salesians of Don Bosco West?

These are probing and challenging reflections the Rector Major offers our Region. As we celebrate Thanksgiving this week, let's give thanks for this great Salesian vocation. And as we begin the Novena to the Immaculate

Conception next week, we remind ourselves, as that same C 34 says, that "The Virgin Mary is present in this process as a mother."

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Timothy C. Ploch, SDB
Provincial

Provincial's Calendar

November 2011

- 21 Office Day
- 22 Thanksgiving Day Dinner, Salesian High, Richmond
- 25-27 Office Days
- 28-29 CMSM Region 6 Meeting, Encino, CA
- 30 Office Day

December 2011

- 1 Los Angeles Boys & Girls Club Board Meeting
- 2-6 Visitation: Corpus Christi Parish, San Francisco
- 7 Office Day

May they Rest in Peace

Fr. Clement Cardillo, SDB (SUE)

November 22, 2011
aged 86
Orange, NJ

Fr. Jerzy Schneider, SDB (SUE)

November 22, 2011
aged 88
Ramsey, NJ

Discernment Weekend in Review



November 22, 2011

Dear Salesian Family,
I hope this message finds you in good spirits!

The Vocation Discernment Weekend, November 10-13, went well. I have already heard from three (3) young men out of the group of seven (7) participants that they will be applying for the Candidacy Program. More might be coming. Thank God for that!

For this InTouch, I thought some “thank you notes and evaluations” from the discernees would be worth reading! These outcomes are a good token to all in the Salesian Family and a sign of encouragement to promote a vocation culture. Here are four notes to summarize the weekend:

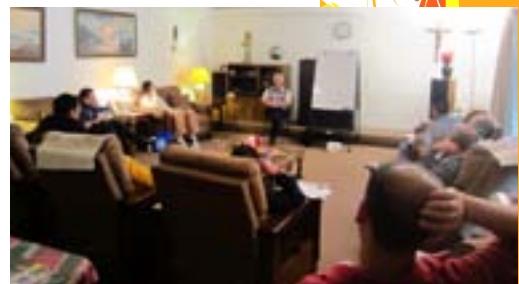
- 1) “Last weekend was special to me; I met many wonderful Salesian fathers, brothers, novices, candidates, and young men discerning their vocation. It confirmed God’s calling into religious life.”
- 2) “The fidelity talk, presented by Fr. Tom, told a story of when he had to stay in the office and do paper work, instead of be outside and have fun with the kids. But he shared that God told him this is his turn to be here so the other Salesians can be outside with the kids. To me I think this is a good point and it shows the true meaning of the vow of obedience.”
- 3) “Fr. Jerry’s presentation on the vows was eye-opening for me. I will never look at the vows in the same way again, but in a positive way.”
- 4) “The weekend was grace-filled and amazing!”

Thank you to everyone who participated and helped make the Discernment Weekend a success. A special thanks to the Don Bosco Tech community for hosting, as everyone from the weekend felt at home! I appreciate it.

Blessings in Don Bosco and Christ the King,

Chinh, SDB

626.688.2939



THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY by Fr. Jose Lucero, SDB



Federation from Massachusetts and SFOP Members come together.

2. The San Francisco Organizing Project (SFOP) began to get involved with us in helping us to tell our story and to take action. You may remember several issues back Rafael Cardenas, a young man on the youth ministry adult team, wrote a letter regarding this event.

As a result of this event, I began getting more and more involved with SFOP as a way to feel that I was doing something about our situation of fear and insecurity that had now set into the minds of our parish family.

The San Francisco Organizing Project "Clergy Team" of which I am a member, joined over 500 Clergy from various faith perspectives throughout the United States on November 14-17 in New Orleans, for a conference to educate said clergy in issues such as: immigration reform, more education, less incarceration, affordable housing, divesting, healthcare for all, and the foreclosures that are taking place in mass amounts in this country and particularly in our communities. Our hope is to give a faith voice and illuminate our community in this rapidly changing world.

1. As you may or may not know, Corpus Christi Youth Ministry was vandalized and robbed on June 28, 2011. \$10,000 worth of recording studio equipment was stolen. Needless to say, things have never been the same. For me, as an Associate Pastor and CYM, I had never in my life been so violated or powerless. More than the equipment being stolen, I felt as if I had personally been robbed of my safety, of my ability to work with young people, providing a safe space for them. About that same time, two of our young men in youth ministry had guns pointed at them and their lives were threatened. Later I found out that other churches nearby had also been robbed and that recurrences of violence were taking place more and more in our neighborhood. It was evident that the desperation of our economic situation had trickled down to the youth in the neighborhood.



Group from Stockton and I getting to know more about PICO



Around the Province



Fr. Eliseo, SJ and myself discussing sermons and homilies.

4. I discovered that one of the purposes for this clergy conference was to help all clergy become courageous leaders in their work as pastors and educators. In essence we were challenged to beg the question, "What values do we hold most dear?" Are we helping the members of our Salesian Family feel that their lives matter?

Have we even taken note that perhaps those attending our churches seem to be a bit lost and not sure their prayers are being answered when at the end of Mass they still have to wonder how they are going to feed their families, or worry about how they will take care of a parent who does not have insurance or about the risk of losing their home? Is it possible that people are losing hope and have forgotten what intentional prayer is since we live in a society when those who are supposed to care for the people are lying to them? And so perhaps people come into Mass, to "fulfill their obligation" and run out as if though they are in a rat race towards desperation.

In other words this could all be happening as a result of the shift that has taken place in political values of those in power resulting in lots of money being taken from the 99% which is our average parishioner, the average Joe worker and then given it to that 1%, which creates this large disparity in our economic system causing thousands of foreclosures, heightened poverty and much insecurity. It has taken money away from schools and given millions of \$\$\$ to private companies to build thousands of prisons and holding centers, not only for criminals, but for those being deported and separated from their families because they got caught with a broken light and no insurance. So now they must be separated from their children and in the process are treated like criminals, resulting in mass incarcerations.

3. I was very unsure of what I was getting myself into. I felt like a fish out of water with all these clergy who for the most part had been organizing in their communities for some time now. I did not know what to expect but I kept an open mind and an open heart to all that would be presented to me and to all present.

One of the main issues covered was this issue of divesting which means moving your money from banks such as Bank of America, Wells Fargo and Chase Bank. What I learned was that these banks make money by taking it from middle and low-income people in the form of ridiculous fees and exceptionally high interest rates on loans and credit cards and that there is not a (SRI) Social Responsibility Investment and/or Community Investment taking place in our Urban Communities. How have these or other public decisions that are being made had an impact on our lives and the lives of our families? On the lives of our youth? How have these decisions created or restricted opportunities for our families, for our communities and for our young people, especially those with whom we work?



Action taking place at local Church In New Orleans

Around the Province



5. If we are paying attention, we will listen to what is happening in the Occupy Wall street campaigns throughout our country and ask ourselves, are we Salesians right there with our alumni who are advocating for justice and change?

I would like to see us as a western province begin this discussion with telling our stories, pinpointing areas where our stories converge and advocating change within our communities. Perhaps we will be moved to act in a way that has us fighting for the young and the poor in a more deliberate way.

Jesus in the gospel of Matthew empowered his disciples. "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'" Mt 28:18-20

Jesus also advocated for the poor and spent time with the dregdes of society.

I also learned there are bishops who have gotten on board with organizing to give a faith voice to reaffirm the Catholic Social Teachings of the Church which is to work for the poor. How do we know this is what we are supposed to do? WE NEED TO PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT THE GOSPELS TELL US.

What does the word gospel even mean? And why do we have the gospels? We know the gospels were written basically to tell the stories and life of Jesus Christ. Gospel means good news. And who is the good news for? The good news is for the poor, and when the poor are being taken care of, then we are truly living out our call to build God's kingdom in the here and now.

Don Bosco changed the political systems of his time without getting directly involved with politics when he took hundreds of kids off the streets who were being exploited. He provided food and shelter and equipped them with the proper skill sets to go out into the world find good jobs, finding their place in society as honest and productive citizens. And he also taught all of these young men to become good Christians, of whom many became priests. Of course we know that 22 of these young men opted to stay with Don Bosco as his first Salesians who would go out into the world and effect change, thus creating our Salesian Family as we see it today.

I don't believe the world is going to end in 2012, but I do believe the world as we know it is going to change and who's to say the Salesian Society isn't going to help this change come about?

Don Pascuale Chavez spoke to us about becoming advocates for the immigrants in our world, and specifically in our communities, as well as for those living in poverty and on the verge of homelessness. Perhaps we can speak not only for our young and their families who come to us in our parishes, schools and youth centers, but also for those in the surrounding cities, by becoming community organizers, giving a faith voice to our people who feel they have no voice.

Perhaps it's about time we move out of our complacent ways of working with youth and be bold enough to make a radical change in this radically changing world. By being that faith voice for the young of today and their families, we

Thanksgiving is Education

By Sr. Mary Greenan, FMA



Salesian High School, here in Richmond, sent out 31 boxes of food to neighboring families who find themselves in financial difficulties at this holiday period. Each box contained not only non-perishable items, but also a gift card ranging from \$25 to \$100 dollars in value to enable the family to purchase their turkey. Some of our

student leaders loaded up two trucks for distribution, but this was a whole community effort. Each box had been prepared by a Faith Family. Boxes were decorated by members of the Faith Family and cards were created and signed.

For us, this marks the beginning of the “holiday” period, which culminates in Christmas. It was interesting to note the excitement and good will that preparing the Thanksgiving boxes generated. It was also interesting to note that there were some defaulters in donating to the food drive. There are undoubtedly myriad reasons for defaulting on such an occasion, especially in these times and in our neck of the woods. However there is a need to continue to educate our young people to the reason and need for donating from the little we have. Our student service requirement carries with it every year two intentional donation moments. This Thanksgiving donation is one, and the toy each student is requested to provide for our upcoming Project Santa is the other. These donation events have been put in place precisely so that our students may continue to understand the point and power for good that there is in “almsgiving.”

We are finding, and wonder if this is a reflection on where we are today as a society, that more time now needs to be spent in “educating to giving.” This of itself raises the issue of what it really means to be grateful for what we have. Perhaps that is the point, for if we are not ready to give, then how real is our “thanksgiving?”

“An educator should realize that these fine lads, or nearly all, are smart enough to sense the good done to them and innately open to sentiments of gratitude. With God’s help, we must strive to make them grasp the main tenets of our faith which, based entirely on love, reminds us of God’s infinite Love for mankind. We must seek to strike in their hearts a chord of gratitude which we owe Him in return for the benefits He so generously showers upon us. We must do our best to convince them through simple reasoning that gratitude to God means carrying out His Will and obeying His commandments, especially those which stress the observance of the duties of our state of life. Believe me, if our efforts succeed, we have accomplished the greater part of our educational task.”

- Don Bosco

“O my children, how great is Divine Providence! How generous God is to us! How much He loves us! Let us always be grateful and good! Let us love Him and never offend Him! In turn He will always provide for our needs.”

- Don Bosco

InTouch Provincial Newsletter

Salesians of St. John Bosco
1100 Franklin Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
Phone: (626) 280-8622 #35
E-mail: intouch@salesiansc.org
Weekly publications will be distributed on Wednesdays. Please submit news for publication by Friday of each week.
Send contributions to:
intouch@salesiansc.org.

Don Bosco Study Sts. Peter & Paul



So far we have 32 people in our DB Study Group at Peter and Paul.

At our first meeting, each of us spent

time saying how we had come to know Don Bosco (many, like me, since 6 or 7 years old).

Before we meet in January, we will be reading: 1) Province study guides: Oct.-Jan (if Jan. is out before we meet) and 2) Don Bosco's own "Memoirs of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales."

Fr. Art Lenti was on hand to encourage us and to give us some insight into the body of scholarship done on our Holy Founder's life and work.

While writing this e-mail, I just got a phone call from a Corpus Christ (SF) parishioner who read about our project in the Archdiocesan paper. She is joining and spreading the word at her parish and the church's deanery.

I hope to involve more young people, too. We have several that are at USF on scholarship from the Salesian Boys/Girls Club SF and Russ Gumina and Randy De Martini will be recruiting them to join. Russ is already in the group with his wife, Jill. Sr. Kathleen Gibson will be speaking to some of our high school teens. We have 5 SDB's and 3 FMA's taking part, including pastor Fr. John Itzaina.

Happy Thanksgiving and God bless,

Frank Lavin

MEDIA MATTERS



What if Christmas became a world-changing event again? Welcome to Advent Conspiracy, a movement calling us to proclaim Christ in how we celebrate Christmas.

[Enter the Story 2011](#)

[Advent Conspiracy](#)

NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER

Survey highlights struggles of young Hispanic Catholics

By the Catholics in America Research Team

October 24, 2011

[Catholics in America](#)

America Magazine

Will There Be Faith?

A NEW VISION FOR EDUCATING AND GROWING DISCIPLES

BY THOMAS H. GROOME

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Book review by William J. O'Malley

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19 November 2011

Be'er Sheva

Be'er Sheva is the largest city in the Negev, the southern part of Israel. Thus, often referred to as the 'Capital of Negev.' The Hebrew word *be'er* means "well" and *sheva* meaning "seven" and hence, the town's name is *seventh well* or *well of seven*.

The area of Beersheba plays an important role in the biblical history particularly of the Old Testament. It is the place where:

- *Hagar went after Abraham sent her away with Ishmael*
- *Abraham and Abimelech made a treaty to avoid conflict and naming the town Beersheba.*
- *Isaac stayed most of his lifetime except when he came to Cana*
- *Jacob cunningly stole Isaac's blessings from his twin brother; the area where he had the Stairway to Heaven dream; land later on, where God spoke to him on his way to Egypt with the Israelites to remain there for over 400 years*
- *the prophet Elijah sought refuge after Jezebel ordered him to be killed*
- *Samuel's two sons served as judges when the Israelites demanded*

Inside this issue:

- Tel Be'er Sheva National Park 1
- Mamshit National Park 2
- Makhtesh Gadol 2



Biblical Glimpse

by Bros. Chuyen Nguyen and Itchan Laygo, SDB

Tel Be'er Sheva National Park

And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father; fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your descendants for my servant Abraham's sake." So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well. (Genesis 26:23-25)

Tel Be'er Sheva is an Iron Age (Chalcolithic) Israelite city that was excavated in 1969 by the Tel Aviv University Institute of Archaeology.

There are 15 strata of settlements (revealing planned cities on top of one another)



were in Stratum 2 dates back to the time of the kings of Judah, apparently Hezekiah –8 century BCE.

Today, we find the city ruins with a fortress from the Persian period, a temple from the Hellenistic period, a fortress from the Herodian (Early Roman) period and the early Muslim period.



The discovery of the Four-Horned Altar meant that a temple stood in the city before it was dismantled during the cultic reform of King Hezekiah.



City's Water Systems: a stone-face Shaft (above) and the Well mentioned in Genesis 26:26-33 (to the left); Students walking through the City Ruins (top far right); and our Professor Fr. Vernet and his Students of Archeology (bottom far right).



Mamshit National Park



The Market

The ancient city of Mamshit is one of the most important branches of the Incense Route (the major ancient trading routes linking the Mediterranean world with Eastern sources of incense and spices). Thus, known for its richness and great possibilities for developments.

A permanent settlement was first established here by the coming of the Nabateans (from southern Jordan and Northern Arab tribes) around mid-first century CE and then fell to the Romans in 106 CE.

The city buildings were continued to be used during the late Roman period even until the third century (the 860 meters long wall was built making it the only city in Negev to be walled all around)



The City Gate

until the fifth century (the Western & Eastern Churches were built) during the Byzantine period. It was only until the Persian invasion in 614 CE or the Arab conquest in 636 CE that Mamshit ceased to exist.



Public Reservoir/Dam



Wealthy House



Baptismal Font



Byzantine Church



Grotto

Makhtesh Gadol

Makhtesh, a Hebrew word meaning Big Crater, is a geological erosional landform of Israel's Negev desert. Makhtesh Gadol is the second largest in Israel five of which is found in the southern desert of Israel (Negev), another two Makhteshim found in Sinai, one in Uzbekistan and another one in Iran.

The formation of these Makhteshim happened about hundred of millions of years ago. The Negev desert was once covered by an ocean. Slowly, this started to recede northwards leaving behind a hump-



shaped hill carving out the inside of the crater as the bottom continue to



deepen in a much faster rate than the surrounding walls thus, increasing its height. And as the crater deepens, more layers of ancient rock were exposed (bottom of which is about 200 million years old).