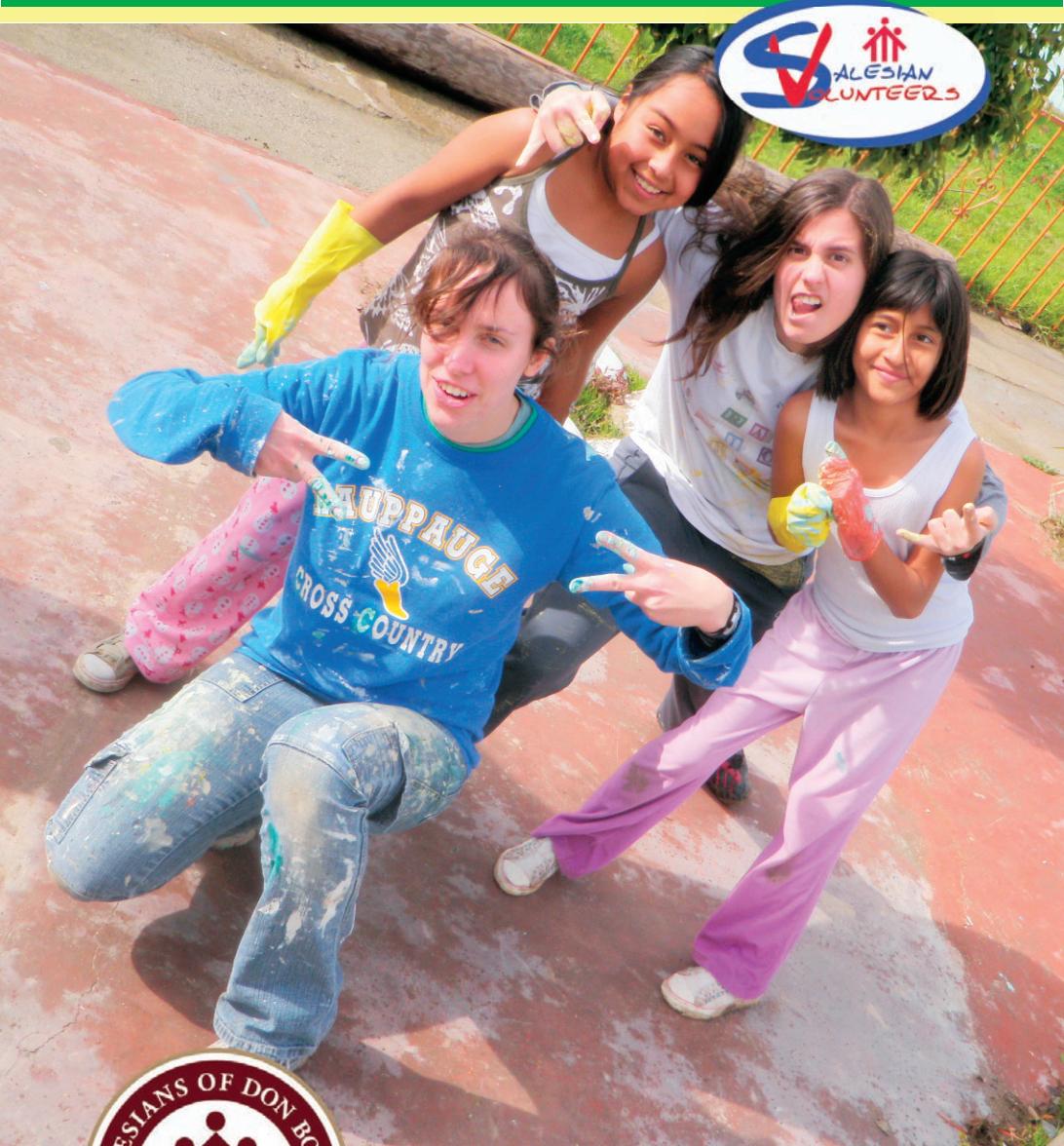


Volunteers

Crossing Frontiers



**Salesians
of Don Bosco**

Volunteers

Crossing Frontiers

Issue # 1

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Cover

Katrina Frank and Catarina Florio, participants of our winter Mission trip 2011 Gospel Roads II in Tijuana Mexico, with two children from “La Lupita” Oratory; they had finished painting and were having a little bit of fun with the camera!

Salesian Missionary Animation

Publisher

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SALESIAN VOLUNTEERS - MAKING THE difference!



Dear Salesian Family,

This is our first attempt to create our Salesian Volunteer Magazine "Crossing Frontiers"; God willing we will publish this magazine two times each year. The main goal is to promote the volunteer program among our communities and to empower young people to say, "Yes", to join Don Bosco's mission "Da Mihi Animas, Cetera Tolle". "Give me souls take away everything else!"

This year the Salesian congregation has dedicated all the missionary efforts to promote the volunteer programs at the world wide level. This is a blessing for us, because our province has chosen the same goal of promoting the volunteer program.

Presently we have six young people who are working in our province as a volunteers. Keep them in your prayers so they persevere in their apostolic work, and let's also pray that God may bless us with more volunteers for our province.

In this edition you will find really interesting articles written by our own young people. Please use the articles as resources and share this magazine with all the youth who are part of your oratory. We hope that this stories will move those who read them to get closer to God, and to give themselves to serve him.

I hope you enjoy this magazine!

In Don Bosco

Juan Carlos Montenegro
Salesian Mission Delegate

Gospel Roads III



Gospel Roads Missionaries
enjoying a field trip

By Marc Meehan

Today is the day after returning from Tijuana. I am fighting off a cold, still very tired, but happy to be back with my community. Each of the past ten days are ones I will never forget. They have been for me an experience of incredible learning and closeness with God. In this trip I have grown in my own spirituality and views of the world in incredible ways. Ways like the inspiration I found in the Austrian missionaries, finding God in places I would not have looked before and having my eyes opened to issues of social justice. This has been my first missionary experience and this is what I take back home with me.

My missionary experience started out right as I arrived to the Salesian residence in Tijuana, late Sunday night around midnight. As we arrived we were met by the Austrian

missionaries who have volunteered a year of their life to the mission in Tijuana. While getting to know these missionaries, Dan, Dominic, Fanny, and Cristoph, I discovered that as they turned eighteen they were given a year to decide whether they would join the Austrian Armed Services for six months or join a missionary service for one year. Going against the popular choice of joining the military, they instead are giving a full year of their lives' in the service of others. Later I found out that if they had joined the military, they would have been paid a great deal. Instead by joining a mission service they only have their bare essentials paid for. From their example alone, of trusting God with their lives' and work for a year, I was inspired.

Even though I had researched the place I was going, I had many fears. As we explored Tijuana, I came to see that any danger was no different than the danger I would have encountered on the streets of my own city of Los Angeles. This fact particularly hit me as we served 700 meals to the homeless on the third day of the trip. I was going around a line of hundreds of people, saying, "Hola" and "Como

An experience that changed my life!

estas?" to them and some other words in my broken Spanish, and I had stopped to talk to one person. As we talked, another man, short, stocky, shaven bald, covered in tattoos with a dodger blue Florencia 13 shirt came up to me from the line and said quite confrontationally, "Hey white boy, what are you doing here?" For those of you who do not know the gangs of Los Angeles, Florencia Trece is among the most notorious. I told him that I was a missionary with the Salesians at the shelter. He then said something along the lines of why am I not somewhere else working and me being a typical smart-alec said "Well, it's kind of far and I am feeling a bit lazy to walk all that way." At that, this man with such a tough looking attitude began to laugh. After a long while of us talking more and him explaining some of his tattoos to me he shared his experience, one similar to most of the people in that line – an experience of being deported and try-



Talia Firpo serving a homeless person

ing to get back to the United States where his wife and two children were waiting for him. After we said, "adios" at the front door, I could not describe myself as feeling anything more overpowering than shocked. I felt such a love for life in being able to find and meet God in this other human being who back in the States I would have gone out of my way to avoid. It was an experience I will never forget.

What a great way to help young people grow in their relationship with God! What a great way to fulfill our call to serve the poor! It amazes me when I hear that the Salesians are the largest missionary presence in the world. I can now clearly see why it was beautiful for me to see how the other young people who attended the trip grew through their work and reflections, and in their relationships with God. This trip has helped me in my own vocation. It has reaffirmed me in my faith, and strengthened my call to service as a Salesian. Most importantly through this experience



Caterina Florio and Mark Meehan sharing time with children from Tijuana

I met a new example of Don Bosco in a Salesian priest who I can truly relate to, and I now can see that this life for me is possible. It would take work but it would be worth it. I am taking back home with me a new confidence and hope; the confidence to continue being who I am trying to be, and the hope to continue believing it is

possible. This has been my first missionary experience. I feel that it will not be my last. I thank God for this experience and this incredible blessing in my life!

I want to become a Volunteer

By Reymundo Gomez

Hello, my name is Reymundo Gomez. I am 18 years old and I am a member of Saint Dominic Savio's parish. I have been coming to the youth group, more or less, for a year. I recently attended SLYC, "Salesian Youth Leadership Conference", and learned a lot of enriching leadership qualities along with spiritual empowerment. I am currently a youth leader at my parish along with eight other leaders. We plan and give talks to the youth of all ages in our Youth Ministry. The reason why I decided to Tijuana is because I felt that I can do

something to help our brothers and sisters in across the border.

We left for Tijuana December 26, 2010. As we arrived I had some clue of what to expect from my past experience three weeks prior to this trip. I was really excited to be back among the volunteers and the priests. I felt like I was at home, they are so welcoming and they make you feel a part of their community. This experience was something that I will remember for the rest of my life.

Something that I really liked was our lunchtime. We were invited to

eat with the families of the neighborhood. They opened their homes and that really touched me, because they didn't have much, but the little that they have they shared with us. Having the chance to eat with the families and talk to them about their life was really cool, and to be able to see how much faith they have was really heart warming. They had to be the nicest people I've ever met.

We worked at different oratories. Our work consisted of manual labor as well as working with the kids and their families. I really got a sense of a strong "Salesian Spirit" among the communities of the oratories.

This experience has really changed my view of the world. Even though we have everything here in the U.S we still complain, because we don't have the nicest car, or latest game system. We get so consumed by this materialistic point of view that we truly forget how blessed we are. This trip has made me realize how blessed I am in my life just to have a roof over my head, and I appreciate everything more than I did before my experience. During this trip I confirmed that serving people, as a missionary is my calling from God. I have already started my formation to be a volunteer. I am open to go wherever God needs me.



Missionaries sharing the table



Group picture at San Jose Oratory



Tacos "El Tio"- A parishioner cooking for the missionaries



View from St. Dominic Savio Oratory Chapel

Service a way to promote vocations

By Juan Carlos Montenegro

To put together a pastoral activity in any of our communities is not that difficult. This article presents several steps that we should take into consideration upon putting together an apostolate activity.

Before the activity takes place it is important to contact the program and the people or organization that we will be working with. While reading this article, you will have the opportunity to see how actual volunteering is put into practice. For example: Let's say that we want to do something for December 24th. The first thing that we do is find an organization that will be willing to welcome us on that day. In this case, we called "His Nesting Place" a Pro-life Christian shelter who gives single mothers the opportunity to keep their babies instead of having an abortion.

If the organization is willing to welcome the group, it is important to set a meeting so the following topics can be discussed:

- What are the organization's expectations?
- Share our expectations... and see if they meet with the organization's expectations



Carolina Cormack served on Christmas at His Nesting place

- What time is the program going to take place?
- What do we need to bring?
- How many people are involved?

Once these questions are answered, it is time to create an internal plan. We call the young people who will be sharing the leadership responsibilities of the project. We explain the organization's expectations, and we proceed to set a goal that can be achievable. When we have a clear goal we move to the next step which is "brainstorming" to see how we can meet our goal.

When we have enough ideas we choose one or two that will help us to achieve the goal. Based on these

Continue...

ideas we create action steps.

Example, in His Nesting Place project we called some young adults who could be involved with the project, some of the ideas that came out of the brainstorming were:

- Create an oratory evening at the shelter
- Bring Pan-dulce for the little kids
- Bring Piñatas
- Have trivia contest with the mothers and children
- Buy pizza for everybody
- Bring arts and crafts for the mothers
- Bring gifts for the children

Once we have all these ideas we strategies them and created action steps which were assigned among our young person so they were responsible to make them happened. Next we set an activities chronogram stating times and due dates to have everything completed and prepared. Once this was cleared, we set another meeting to check how things were going and see if the youth, needed helping planning or completing the activities.

When everybody knew what they were doing, it was easy to have everything prepared before December 24th, the scheduled day to visit His Nesting Place.

Up to this point, this technique is the same that any organization uses to create an "activity". Now how can we make it Salesian?

On December 24th we met the young people who would be participating in this Pastoral Event. We studied the word of God, we prayed and we shared our feelings before going to the event. We made sure that young people understood that what they were doing was our Christian responsibility. We were going to visit Jesus in the most needy.



Mothers holding their Nativity craft



Free to clown with Salesian friends

While in the activity, we the youth ministers, try to be present to them. We accompany them while they are sharing time with the children and mothers. Once the activity is ended, we gather again and we ask the them to express their feelings. We ask them to share with us where they saw Christ. This last reflection is the most important, because here we give

them the opportunity to think, reflect, and learn from what they just did. If we don't have these reflections, it becomes a nice activity that made them feel good, but has no connections with God and who they are.

These short missionary experiences will help our young people to cultivate a missionary heart that will make the difference in our community and eventually in our society. This is how St. John Bosco worked, he engaged young people in his dreams, and he empowered them to become agents of change...



What's a party without a "Piñata"?

Volunteer at Richmond!

By Roberto Rios

At the time when I finally decided to do some type of volunteering, I had a wonderful job, some pretty good friends, and a very supportive family. Everything was going good with my life, and I felt that God had given me many incredible gifts of which I had become very grateful for. So, I started thinking of some way in which I could try to pay God back for all the talents and abilities he has bestowed upon me (although I know that I could never repay all the caring and deep love God has given to me).

By doing some volunteering I got some good experience which has made me more conscious regarding the love of God, which is infinite as well as always free. God is always giving you his love no matter what you do and no matter where you are. It is always totally free; It does not cost you anything. You just receive his love and that is all you have to do. Therefore, I really believe that people should do something for somebody without any expectations, without getting any kind of com-

pensation. So, a person does not look for any payment or reward but does it for the love of God and love or their neighbor.

Currently, I am working at the Salesian High School in Richmond, California and living with the Salesian Religious Community that oversees the operation of their High School, and the Boys and Girls Club. I have felt very comfortable and welcomed by the Salesians here. I share in the Community prayer life as well as the social life and the meals. The Salesians who live in the community are very good examples of how happy one could be in sharing in the ministry of working with youth, and of those young people who are very much in need of help and guidance. By sharing in this youth ministry



Bro. Ricardo Ramos and Roberto Rios tutoring children after school

every day I have come to realize that working with youth can be a blessing because you are given the chance to give them both physical, mental as well as moral support. You can show by your good example, your advice and your cheerfulness how much you care for them and support them. By talking to the Salesian here I have found out that serving others is not difficult at all, as people might think. It becomes a pleasure in so many ways.

The volunteer program has also given me the time and the space

to think about my own life. It has given me the time to meditate about my own future, and the aspects in my own life that might need changing, or the decisions I need to make in order to improve myself and become a better person, and a more dedicated Christian.

My duties as a Salesian volunteer at the Salesian High School calls me to collaborate with the Campus Ministry to plan activities for the students. This also includes student retreats. I also act as a student

service liaison with the Boys and Girls Club, promoting and facilitating the students tutoring and coaching services at the Boys and Girls Club.



Having fun after doing homework!



Fr. Chris Woerz tutoring a children in math

Letter from India...

By Minh Mai

Things are harder now than when I had last written to you. Things are harder because I am currently not at the school, and not with my children right now. The school is on winter holiday so all the kids went home, and Kristina (my site partner) and I are traveling through India. The traveling has been great. We have been to Calcutta and saw Mother Teresa's tomb, Chennai, where we saw the tomb of St. Thomas the Apostle, Kerala the land of coconut trees and Bangalore a very westernized city. Not being with my children makes being in India and being so far from my family and friends a lot harder to bear. Also, just being far from family during the holidays is hard....Not going to midnight mass with my family on Christmas, not being able to be there when everyone open their presents on Christmas morning, and not counting down the New Year with my family are all hard. And there are moments when I feel like, "why am I here in India and not with my family right now?" But then, those are also the moments when I can feel God there with me, comforting me, and reminding me that the kids are the reason why I am here, the reason why He called

me to be here. And, if He wanted me to be here, then this is where I need to be.....There are moments of doubt—self-doubt— moments of weakness, but God has always been there to be the strength that I need to get past those moments of doubt and reaffirm His calling in my heart.

Every day, even though I get more sleep, I miss the children, and I feel like not using sign language for the past couple of weeks, I'm getting rusty! I hope the children can still understand me when I get back....I miss the way some of the kids will just jump on my back and slowly slide down to my lap until they're sitting or lying comfortably on my lap, or the way some of the kids will fall asleep on my lap while watching T.V. after a long day of studying and playing, or the way they run to hold my hands after school because they haven't seen me in a couple of hours.



Children from Ferrando Speech & Hearing Centre in India

At the beginning of September I felt like this was going to be a long year of hard work, and now after completing 4 months I can't believe how fast time has passed. Now, I can't imagine having to say goodbye to my children and get on that plane home. I can only hope

and pray that everyone is doing well there.

I leave you with these words of Don Bosco, "It is not enough to love the young, they must know that they are loved." That is what I'm trying to do here, and I hope you will do the same wherever you are!

The Missionary Reflection- Prayer

By Fr. Steve Ryan, SDB

"One day at a time" is such a trite phrase that we can hear as a spiritual "practice" or motto in a sermon or good night. The fact of the matter is: we really have trouble living only one day at a time in the present moment. That's because we are too full of our own ideas, plans, schemes, and too preoccupied with our own agenda.

But, our Lord is there to help us to really take JUST one day at the time and to make it a day to love and serve. It's really the only day we've got, because tomorrow is a gift that is not guaranteed and yesterday does not exist anymore. Today we woke up so let's do it!

How does this relate to our present life situation?. We are somewhat spinning out of control with work

and problems, and even our own fears of the future and self-doubts.

What can we do?

- Live in the present moment
- Be calm-go with the flow
- Do the next loving thing (St. Francis de Sales)
- Focus on the person in front of you. Don't get too far ahead of yourself.
- And pray! Pray like mad!

Feeling insecure about the future and somewhat helpless and desperate about where God is leading us is completely normal. It is the human experience.

My Lord, we ask you to help us to understand what we celebrate at Christmas-to make God's love incarnate. We ask you to help us to be humble, to live a life of service knowing that in the uncertainty and insecurity you are always there for us, to make our life a witness that

you are the #1 thing!

So now, what the heck are we getting worked up about the future. We've chosen only you as our future. Nothing else but you. Why are we worried all of a sudden about things we can't control?

So, please, let's do our best and

leave everything in God's hands! Stop worrying. All will be well! Jesus, only you, only you, only you, only you. You are our security our strength and our future. Help us to let the rest go! Give us the strength to give ourselves to you!

Amen.

Summer Volunteer Opportunities around the province...

We are looking for camp counselors in the following locations, for more information, please contact us.

Salesian Boys & Girls Club -- San Francisco, CA

<http://www.salesianclub.org/>

Corpus Christi Summer Camp -- San Francisco, CA

<http://www.ccsdbsf.org>

Camp St. Francis - Aptos, CA -- *Overnight Camp*

www.salesianym.org/campstfrancis.

Salesian Youth Center Camp -- Los Angeles, CA

<http://www.salesianclubs-la.org/>

Camp Savio -- Bellflower, CA

<http://www.saintdominicsavio.org/campsavio/>

San Luis Rey Camp -- Laredo, TX

mgergen50@yahoo.com





For more information please visit our web site at
www.salesianvolunteers.org