

Australian

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The season of Lent, reflecting and connecting



'Make the most of each day'

On Thursday, 12 January, Pope Francis celebrated Mass in the chapel of the Casa Santa Marta. Following the readings of the day, the Holy Father reflected on the unique and unrepeatable opportunities each day offers to grow in faith and love of God.

There is only one 'today', in our lives – only one real, concrete today. Our temptation and everyone's temptation is to say: Yes, I will do tomorrow, but tomorrow may not be. I say this not to scare you, but simply to say that our life is today: now or never. The question that I put to you is the same the Holy Spirit is putting to all of us, i.e. How ought I to live, this day? 'Today' is played out in our hearts. Are our hearts opened to the Lord? I pray that the day arrives full, full, with a heart strong in faith, and not ruined by sin, vices, corruption.

Today does not repeat itself: this is life. And the heart must be open, open to the Lord, not closed, not hard, not hardened, not without faith, not perverted, not deceived by sin. We go home with these few words only: how is my 'today'? The sunset can be today, this day or many days later. But how are you, my today, in the presence of the Lord? And how is my heart? Is it open? Is it firm in the faith? Is it led by the Lord? With these questions we ask the Lord for the grace which each of us needs."



Cover

Connection is perhaps the most cherished thing any human being can have, and we need connections that satisfy both our human and spiritual needs. We should always be looking to form and strengthen our own connections to others and be open and facilitating of those trying to connect with us, both human and spiritual.

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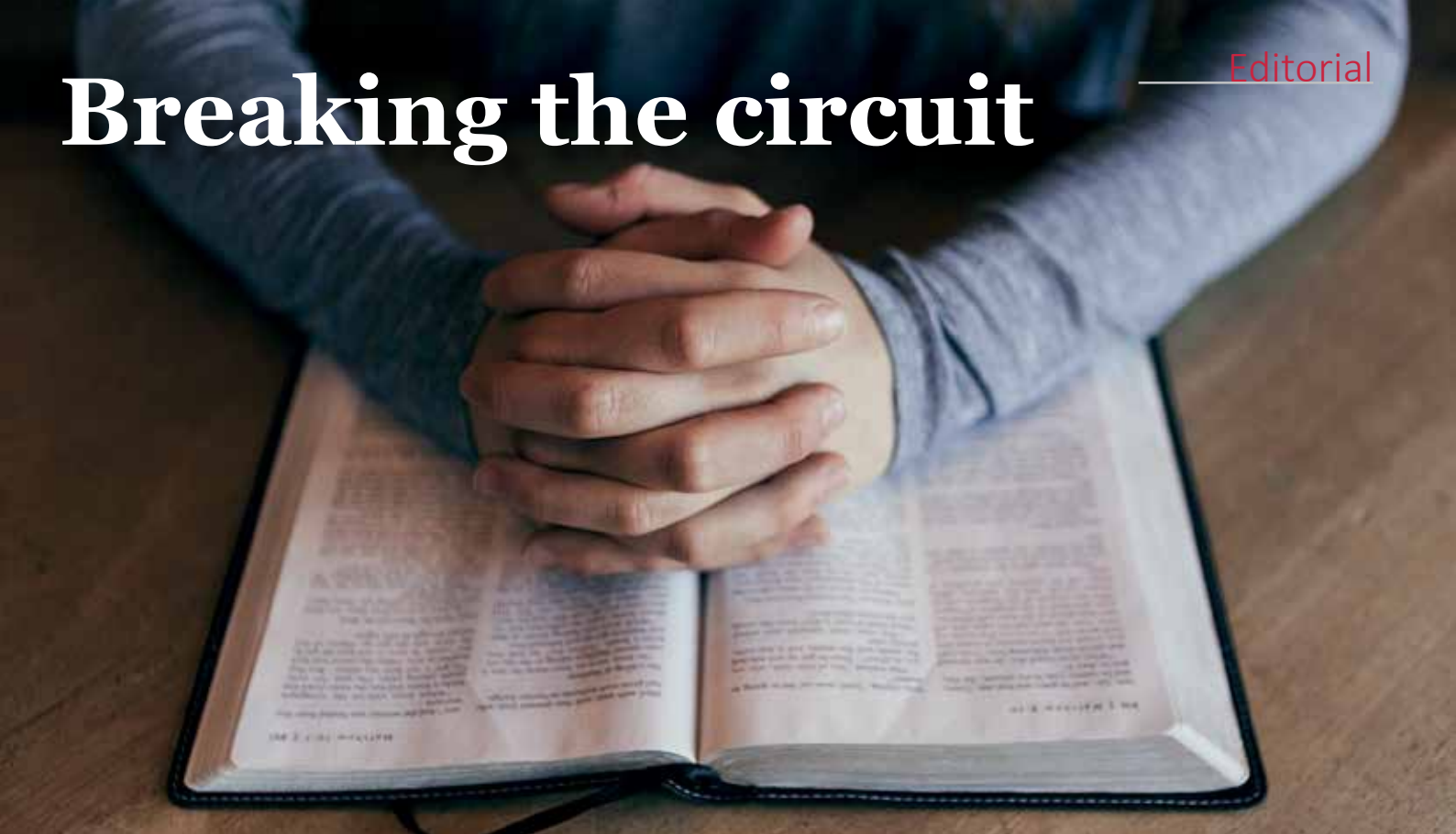
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Breaking the circuit



The day-to-day business of making a living, and the fulfilment of our duties, make great demands on our energies. Immersed in a busy round of responsibilities, people and situations challenge us continually. It is not easy to find time to reflect on things outside our everyday matters. After a long tiring day on the farm or at the office, at school or in the home, most of us like to put our feet up, sit back and look at a television screen. Yet, if this becomes an unvarying routine, we could be missing out on some of the best things in life.

Thinking itself can become relaxing, so long as it is concerned with things far removed from those which have required our attention during the day. Some of the most fascinating adventures lie in the territory of the mind. Thought enables us to break through into unfamiliar worlds and gives a new interest to life. How do we start such a journey? A good book, especially one which lifts the spirit and removes us from the monotonous round in which we might have slowly entrenched ourselves.

How long has it been since we have opened up a book dealing with some spiritual topic, allowing us to see deeper meaning in our life? Oh, so many of our minds today suffer from spiritual malnutrition! A few minutes' spiritual reading each day will certainly kick-start the mind into activity. Then quiet, reflective music can have the same effect. A person told me recently that a time is set apart each day for him to get his daily fix of restful music. Somehow music has the power "to rinse the ear and mind" if in our day we but "sit and let the sounds of music creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night become the touches of sweet harmony". [Shakespeare]

A pleasant walk can set the mind working, especially in the evening when nature seems to give to all things a certain gentleness. "Now is the healing: quiet hours which fill this grey green world with peace and grateful rest". [C. J. Dennis] By taking time out to think we broaden our interests, enlarge our range of vision and become bigger and better human beings. We thus become better equipped to deal with the difficulties of our business or occupation or with the problems that life can throw in our path.

To think for oneself is an essential part of the process of self-development. We help to liberate ourselves from the prison of prejudice and drudgery of second-hand ideas. One thought leads to another, and, once the mind has become stimulated, it is amazing what it will do. Thought is a very powerful instrument which can transform our attitudes and bring into focus new entrancing vistas of whose existence we were totally unaware.

The season of Lent is with us, signalling that it is time for some spiritual renewal by increased prayer, the strengthening of our will by self-denial, and increased interest and assistance to the poor. And all this for us to be better prepared for our celebration of the Resurrection of Christ. Let us honour this holy time by breaking the circuit, taking time out to reflect. Our lives and those of our loved ones will be the richer for it.



Editor

*Frank Freeman SDB,
editor of the Australian
Salesian Bulletin*



Families never go out of style

Our family has been the most precious resource we have had in life. It was truly a cradle of life in which we felt loved, cared for, protected and accompanied so that we could manage on our own in life.

My dear friends, readers of the Salesian Bulletin, friends of Don Bosco and his works throughout the world, and my dear Salesian Family: I greet you with all cordiality, wishing you the best in 2017, the new year that the Lord has given us as a gift.

Prompted by the beginning of a new year, and faithful to a tradition that comes down to us from Don Bosco himself, the Rector Major offers a strenna for that upcoming year. It is first delivered to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and, with them, to the entire Salesian Family around the world.

This year's theme, in keeping with Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, is on the family – all families worldwide – and has as its slogan: “We Are Family: Every Home a School of Life and Love.” Precisely this slogan and all that I have written as a commentary on it permits me to greet you with this reflection in which, with all sincerity, I state that families never go out of style: they are always “in fashion” in every age, for they are vital and essential in the lives of all people, in all ages, and in all cultures. Numerous studies and research reveal this.

And I wish to confirm this, too, by referring to the experience that each one of us, each one of you who is reading this, has had. We must recognize that, notwithstanding the limitations of our own families – our real, “flesh and blood” imperfect families – generally speaking, our family has been the most precious resource we have had in life; it was what led many of you to form your own family, following your lay vocation. It was truly a cradle of life in which we felt loved, cared for, protected, and accompanied so that we could manage on our own in life. It has been, and continues to be, for many of us, the place where we receive affection and where we replenish our energies, and the “life space” that gives us serenity and creates personal harmony.

While writing this letter to the Salesian Family around the world, I felt in my heart that I should expound upon what the very Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, did: He had not only a mother chosen by God but also a family in which to be loved and cared for; a family in which He lived and learned many things, just as happens with us. Ultimately, He “learned how to be human.”



Fr Ángel Fernández Artime

Fr Ángel is the Rector Major of the Salesians and the 10th successor of Don Bosco

And I also thought about Don Bosco. He himself narrated to us what living without a father from less than two years of age entailed: certainly having a family but feeling like an orphan, even with the gift of an exceptional mother like Mamma Margaret. Mary Domenica Mazzarello (Maín) also came to mind. She lived in a religious context on a farm, very similar to that of Don Bosco, but different in that her infancy, adolescence and young adulthood were lived entirely in her native town of Mornese and in the bosom of a numerous family that had the protection of both father and mother.

There are many other life and family stories I could share with you.

My travels around the world have helped me see how important the family and families are, with their cultural and ethnic diversity, and how truly essential and fundamental they still are in all societies, as the first and common school of humanity.

Together with this, I invite you, dear readers, as Pope Francis has done, to take very seriously the value of and contact with families, for they are the house and the home for every boy and girl. It is here that one learns the fundamental value of love and of the affection that upholds and which parents give to their children. It is in the family that one teaches and learns the arts of dialogue, communication and understanding, in living together day by day, with encounters and disagreements, and what life itself is like. It is also in the family that one experiences limitations, but also the most precious and essential of values: love, faith, freedom, respect, justice, work, honesty, etc., putting their roots into everyone's life.

There are yet other things that are not so much in fashion these days but which, with great reason, ought to exist in families, for they are significant. It should be the family that educates to temperance and moderation and that teaches that a word pledged has great value, and that committing oneself to something or someone shows the quality and dignity of the person. It is the family – or it ought to be the family – that offers the great gift of passing on the Faith.

And so, in answer to Pope Francis' strong appeal, what can we do to support the families and their children whom we meet on a daily basis in our educational presences around the world?

We can:

- ◆ place our bets decidedly on accompanying to the extent that they need and want us to the journey that many of those families who are known to us are making;
- ◆ help families educate and grow through affection and the heart;
- ◆ be a home open to them where they know and feel that they will always be well received;
- ◆ accompany the young who have a dream for their life plan and for matrimony;
- ◆ be fearless in proposing human, moral, and spiritual values to our young people and their families for, certainly, they desire and need these more than they can say;
- ◆ foster in the families of the young people under our care, the sense of joy in loving;
- ◆ help, through this awareness, to eradicate every type of discrimination against girls and women wherever we encounter them;
- ◆ maintain always an attitude of empathy and be ever ready to grasp the sometimes difficult realities in which many of the families around us are living; and
- ◆ return decidedly, again and again, to the authentic family atmosphere of Valdocco that Don Bosco so desired.

I hope that we will be able to go forward and make some of these things happen.

May the Family of Nazareth help us, as Pope Francis asks in his prayer:

*“Holy Family of Nazareth,
make us once more mindful
of the sacredness and inviolability of the family
and its beauty in God’s plan.”*



The importance of a solid guide in the spiritual life

Action backed words: Pope Francis hears confessions of teenagers in St Peter's Square. On Saturday, 28 January, Pope Francis stressed the importance of having a solid guide in the spiritual life since no one – neither laity nor consecrated persons themselves – can stay faithful for long without help.

“All of us consecrated, the young and those not so young, need adequate help for the human, spiritual and vocational moment we are living,” the Pope said. “We will never emphasize this need too much.”

He honed in on the need for adequate preparation of spiritual guides, since it’s “hard to stay faithful walking alone, or walking with the guidance of brothers or sisters who aren’t capable of attentive and patient listening, or who don’t have adequate experience of consecrated life.”

Using the image of Jesus and the disciples of Emmaus as an example, the Pope said there is a need for spiritual guides who are “experts in the ways of God” and are capable of accompanying people through life, pointing them to the Eucharist and Confession in times of hardship or confusion.

“This is the delicate and demanding task of a spiritual guide,” he said, and warned against ways of accompanying that create dependencies, false protections or that are too “childish.”

Instead, “we cannot resign ourselves to walking alone,” and need “a close, frequent and fully adult accompaniment,” he said, adding that having this will help in knowing how to constantly discern the will of God.

Prayer is power

Prayer is not only worship; it is also an invisible emanation of man's worshiping spirit, the most powerful form of energy that one can generate. The influence of prayer on the human mind and body is as demonstrable as that of secreting glands. Its results can be measured in terms of increased physical buoyancy, a greater intellectual vigour, moral stamina, and a deeper understanding of the realities underlying human relationships.

If you make a habit of sincere prayer, your life will be very noticeably and profoundly altered. Prayer stamps with its indelible mark our actions and demeanour. A tranquillity of bearing, a facial and bodily response, are observed in those whose inner lives are thus enriched. Within the depths of consciousness a flame kindles. And man sees himself. He discovers his selfishness, his silly pride, his fears, his greeds, his blunders. He develops a sense of moral obligation, intellectual humility.

This begins a journey of the soul toward the realm of grace. Prayer is a force as real as terrestrial gravity. As a physician, I have seen men, after all other therapy had failed, lifted out of disease and melancholy by the serene effort of prayer. It is the only power in the world that seems to overcome the so called "laws of nature"; the occasions on which prayer has dramatically done this, have been termed "miracles."

But a constant, quieter miracle takes place hourly in the hearts of men and women who have discovered that prayer supplies them with a steady flow of sustaining power in their daily lives. Too many people regard prayer as a formalized routine of words, a refuge for weaklings, or a childish petition for material things. We sadly undervalue prayer when we conceive it in these terms, just as we should underestimate rain by describing it as something that fills the birdbath in our garden. Properly understood, prayer is a mature activity indispensable to the fullest development of personality, the ultimate integration of man's highest faculties.

Only in prayer do we achieve that complete and harmonious assembly of body, mind and spirit which gives the frail human reed its unshakeable strength. The words, "Ask and it shall be given to you," have been verified by the experience of humanity. True, prayer may not restore the dead child to life or bring relief from physical pain. But prayer, like radium, is a source of luminous, self generating energy. How does prayer fortify us with so much dynamic power? To answer this question (admittedly outside the jurisdiction of science) I must point out that all prayers have one thing in common. The triumphant hosannas of a great oratorio, or the humble supplication of an Iroquois hunter begging for luck in the chase, demonstrate the same truth: that human beings seek to augment their finite energy by addressing themselves to the infinite source of all energy. When we pray, we link ourselves with the inexhaustible motive power that spins the universe. We ask that a part of this power be apportioned to our needs. Even in asking, our human deficiencies are filled and we arise strengthened and repaired. But we must never summon God merely for the gratification of our whims.

We derive most power from prayer when we use it, not as a petition, but as a supplication that we may become more like Him. Prayer should be regarded as practice of the Presence of God. An old peasant was seated along in the last pew of the village church. "What are you waiting for?" he was asked; and he answered, "I am looking at Him and He is looking at me." Man prays not only that God should remember him, but also that he should remember God. How can prayer be defined? Prayer is the effort of man to reach God, to commune with an invisible being, creator of all things, supreme wisdom, truth, beauty and strength, father and redeemer of each man. This goal of prayer always remains hidden to intelligence. For both language and thought fail when we attempt to describe God.



Dr Alexis Carrel

Alexis Carrel was a French surgeon and biologist who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1912 for pioneering vascular suturing techniques. He invented the first perfusion pump with Charles A. Lindbergh opening the way to organ transplantation.

Connecting, please wait...



Michael Garland

Michael is an active member of ASYC (Australian Salesian Youth Community) and a member of the editorial team for the Australian Salesian Bulletin. He has completed a bachelor's degree in Media Communication and a master's in Journalism & International relations.

Recently, I had the absolute privilege of visiting my Grandma in hospital. Obviously, the circumstances could have been better but we had the chance to just sit and chat for hours, free from distractions. We spent a lot of time reminiscing about the good ol' days, which, as it turns out, is a period we both remember quite clearly.

My earliest childhood memories all take place at my Grandma's house, which was just four doors down from our own. When I started primary school my parents were working late hours, so every day after school I would spend a few hours at Grandma's house. Mostly we would play cricket (I only ever had to bowl when I wanted to - rarely), chess (I only found out years later that in actual fact, both players could lose pieces) or we would just read a book together (I certainly don't remember being allowed to cheat at that!). Nor do I recall a single day where it was just the television keeping an eye on me.

There was, of course, plenty of food as well – every day I would be treated to the fluffiest most scrumptious scrambled eggs; they would rest upon toast like tiny yellow clouds, as the Nuttalex Lite was just starting to melt into the bread. This would follow with some absolute classics – choc tops, wafers, tic-toc biscuits, Arnott's assorted, home-made cakes and slices; pretty much anything in the pantry or freezer was fair game.

Every afternoon, I would undergo an incredible transformation; from being just one of many in the classroom or playground, to being at the centre of another person's undivided attention. As soon as I walked through the door until the moment I left, everything that took place was done for my benefit. These memories aren't just memories; they're the experiences of the first connection to another living being that I can consciously recall taking part in. Nothing was too tedious for her if I wanted to do it and nothing was too boring for me when I was doing it with Grandma.

It's never been easier for young people to connect to each other and the world around them. Conversely, it's never been harder for young people to connect to a meaningful and profound spirituality. There is a plethora of mobile phone apps that allow us to keep in touch with friends and family, see places we've never been or even follow the lives of celebrities we've never met astoundingly closely. We can send money and other resources to people and places that we will never meet or visit and we can voice opinions and advocate for causes that have no physical connection to the place we reside in.

Yet, last year, a survey conducted by Lifeline found that 60% of respondents often feel lonely.

82% felt as if Australia is becoming an increasingly lonely place.

While Lifeline is primarily an Australian mental health and suicide prevention service and thus focuses its attention in Australia, this trend is fairly consistent in numerous countries around the globe; a profound disconnect in an increasingly connected world.

On a recent ASYC (Australian Salesian Youth Community) retreat, an important point was made that I believe has increasing value for us to consider in this day and age. There is a clear difference between youth work and youth ministry. Youth work aims to empower and advocate for the young person, it places their interests first. Youth ministry, however, seeks to establish and nourish a connection to God, through Jesus Christ. There is, of course, a great deal of overlap, although the slated outcomes of the two are very different.

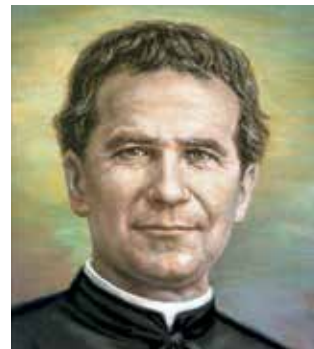
With the power of hindsight, I realized what my Grandma had been doing was the kind of Youth Ministry that Don Bosco was so adept at, whether she realized it or not. At Grandma's I was always comfortable; I knew I was loved, even if I was too young to wrap my head around such an intangible concept. We would run, jump and have all the fun but we wouldn't even dream of sinning.

There were mystical aspects too; we would say prayers before eating and leaving, there were discussions about children's books with stories from scripture, and there was not even the slightest chance Grandma would ever let anyone step out of the front door without a dab of holy water to the forehead.

Connection is perhaps the most cherished thing any human being can have, and we need connections that satisfy both our human and spiritual needs. This means there are two core things that are required of us; we should always be looking to form and strengthen our own connections to others and be open and facilitating of those trying to connect with us, both human and spiritual.



Don Bosco



Message of the Rector Major to the young on the feast of St John Bosco

My dear young people of the entire Salesian world, dear girls and dear boys. I greet you as a friend, brother and father; I address you this greeting on behalf of Don Bosco as I come to you “knocking at the door of your life” on the occasion of the feast of our beloved Father.

A few days ago Pope Francis wrote a letter to youth on the occasion of the presentation of the document that will be used to prepare the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which will be held in October 2018. At the beginning of his letter, the Pope tells you, “I wanted you to be the centre of attention, because you are in my heart.” I know well, from my personal experience, what it means to carry you in my heart and to express every good wish, even if in many cases we have not yet had the possibility of greeting each other personally.

May I tell you something in confidence? Often, when I encounter you, young friends, in the various parts of the world and I must address you, I think what Don Bosco would tell you on behalf of Jesus.

I am aware of the great diversity existing among you according to the nations and continents in which you live; diversities also of culture, diversities for the type of preparation for life, some with studies of vocational training or of qualification for a profession, others through university studies. I am aware that the situation of those who can count on human and economic resources to develop their talents is different from the one of those who lack these opportunities, etc. But I am convinced that your young hearts have so much to share and that, despite the differences, they are very similar to one another, and because of this I think I can address you a common message that reaches you wherever you are.

The message I send you today is in full harmony with the one that on various occasions Pope Francis has been giving you: “Dear young friends, I have confidence in you and I pray for you. Have the courage to ‘swim against the tide’”

Many are the adults who have full confidence in you. I am one of them, my dear young friends, and I invite you to be courageous in your life. I urge you to have the strength to “swim against the tide”, when the call to be faithful to yourself and to Jesus resounds in your hearts.

Today the world needs you. It needs the great ideals that are proper of your youth and of your juvenile dreams. The world, now more than ever, is in need of young people who are full of hope and courage, who are not afraid of living, dreaming, looking for that authentic and profound happiness through which God dwells in your heart. Young people who have the will to commit themselves and who are capable of committing themselves and of loving “to the point of suffering”, as Mother Teresa of Calcutta, now a Saint, said. Young people who, under the spur of their commitment, are capable to donate their time and even to donate themselves.

Regretfully, however, there are many young people who are “tired, bored or disappointed”, or young people who never felt enthusiastic for anything, young people who are weak and frail. These youth need other youth; they need you who, speaking of the experience and with a language that comes from life, may show them that there are other ways and other possibilities. Young people, who help them to really understand that fleeing from the challenges of life is never the solution; young people who also as true disciples-missionaries, help them to discover Jesus in their life and to believe in Him. A Jesus who, obviously, “does not sell you illusions”, but who offers Life, the authentic one, His own Life, His very Self.

I think, my dear youth, that on this 31st of January 2017 Don Bosco could tell you something so simple, with the words and language of today, as the Pope did in his letter: “Do not be afraid ... A better world can be built also as a result of your efforts, your desire to change and your generosity. Do not be afraid to listen to the Spirit who proposes bold choices; do not delay when your conscience asks you to take risks in following the Master.”

I wish with all my heart that it may be so for you: that you may be capable to risk when it comes to Jesus and to God the Father in your life. You will never lack his Presence through the Spirit and it will be a certain guarantee for your human journey of happiness.

I greet you with sincere affection and wish you a happy feast of Don Bosco and the ever maternal protection of our Mother help of Christians.



Fr Ángel Fernández Artime

Fr Ángel is the Rector Major of the Salesians and the 10th successor of Don Bosco

'Vale' Father Julian Scarparo SDB

1939- 2017



The Salesian Province of Ecuador with much sorrow and yet in hope announces the death of Father Julian Scarparo at the age of 77 years. He died from a heart attack during the night of 13 January at 10.45 p. m. in the Hospital of Sotomayor de Guayaquil. His funeral celebrations took place in the chapel of the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians. The Requiem Mass was presided over by the Vice- Provincial Fr Robert Garcia, after which our confrere was taken to his resting place in the Cemetery of Guayaquil with the usual committal funeral honours.

Fr Julian Scarparo was born in Padua, Italy, on 27 April 1939, just before the outbreak of World War 2, to Angelo Scarparo and Angela Cremorne. He entered the Salesian Novitiate of Villa Moglia on the feast of St John Bosco in 1955 and made his first religious profession into the hands of the Rector Major, Fr Renato Ziggotti. Convinced he had a missionary vocation he volunteered for the overseas missions and was sent to Australia, arriving there in 1956. The next three years saw him undertake philosophical studies at Oakleigh followed by three years of practical training at Savio College, Glenorchy. After making his perpetual profession at Salesian College, Chadstone, into the hands of Fr B. M. Fedrigotti, our first provincial, he then returned to his native land to complete his theological studies at Monteortone for the next four years and was ordained to the priesthood on 10 April 1965.

On returning to Australia he was appointed Catechist and Teacher at Boys' Town Engadine in 1966, and then a similar appointment for three years at Glenorchy, Tasmania in 1969. But the priestly ministry as exercised in the highly school-based apostolate that existed then in Australia, really did not fulfil the missionary dreams of this generous and dedicated confrere and so he sought permission in 1976 to transfer to the missions of South America and was subsequently appointed to the Ecuador Province.

He was appointed Rector of the parish community of Sucua for three years. For the next 36 years Julian would occupy positions of responsibility in the schools, technical centres, parishes and festive oratories that make up various apostolic works of the Province.

His last assignment was to the Instituto Pedagogico Don Bosco, Esmeraldas, with its attached parish community. And so Fr Julian Scarparo is the third to return to the Father of those confreres whom this Province, in its generosity, has freed to fulfil their greater missionary vocation in foreign lands; the other confreres are Fr Bernie Paplin who died in Paraguay and Fr Leo Herriot who, after many years in India, died in Melbourne.

Still bearing the heat of the Lord's Vineyard are Frs Ernie De Gaspari in Sudan, Tony De Groot in Guatemala and Fr Brian Diamond in India. May he rest in peace.

The challenge of Lent



**Fr Francis
J. Moloney**

Francis Moloney SDB joined the Salesians in 1960 and was ordained a priest in 1970. He was awarded a Doctorate of Philosophy from Oxford University in 1976. Since then he has a wide teaching and research experience in Australia, Europe, Israel and the USA.

The older ones among us will recall the days when all Catholics were instructed upon the exact weight of food that we were permitted to consume at any given Lenten meal. Such a faulty way of preparing for Easter has long since gone. Yet the issue we associate most intimately with Lent is fasting: “What have you given up for Lent?” Lent must be a time when we think less of ourselves, and more of others, especially those less fortunate. Our liturgy makes this clear from the very first Friday in Lent:

Lent is less concerned with what we do. It asks us to think about who we are as Christians, and to act accordingly. The word “Lent” has nothing to do with abstaining. Its origins are found in the Old English word *lencten* which means “Spring.” It is about the bursting forth of new life. The history of Lent has its origins in the great celebration of the gift of the Law to Israel.

Is that the sort of fast that pleases me, a day when a person inflicts pain on himself?

Hanging your head like a reed, spreading out sackcloth and ashes?

Is that what you call fasting, a day acceptable to the Lord?

Is not this the sort of fast that pleases me: to break unjust fetters,
to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free,
and to break all yokes?

(Isaiah 58:5-6)

The God of Israel gave himself to a fragile people when he set up a Covenant with them at Sinai. That moment is preceded by God's promise to Moses and the People: "I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever" (Exodus 19:9). But this moment calls for preparation. God instructs Moses: Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments, and be ready by the third day" (vv. 10-11). Only when the people had prepared themselves for the advent of their God, "On the morning of the third day" (v. 16), God made himself present in all his splendor (vv. 16-25), and gives them the Law (20:1-20).

Just as Israel confesses that a "People of God" was born at Mount Sinai, we Christians confess that a new "People of God" emerges from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ at Easter. For this reason, a feature of the Easter practices of Christianity is the admission of the Catechumens into the Community through the waters of Baptism. We too have a "Sacred Triduum." We have our "three days," and "on the third day" we acclaim: Jesus is risen" (Christos anēsti), and reply "Jesus is truly risen!" (alēthōs anēsti).

Late in the second century, Saint Irenaeus (130-200 AD) spoke of the need for the Church to look forward to the celebration of Easter with some days of preparation. The very early Council of the Church at Nicea (325 AD) also discussed lengthening the period, but it was Pope Gregory the Great (540-604) who established the forty days that now mark our Lenten period. Why 40 days? This is a sacred biblical time: the universal flood lasted 40 days (Genesis 7:4), Moses was on Mount Sinai for forty days (Exodus 24:18), the People wandered in the desert for forty years (Numbers 14:33), and the Prophet Elijah walked forty days to Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:8). Finally, Jesus was forty days in the desert, struggling to master Satan, before he began his ministry (Mark 1:12-13).

These "days," and what we do on them challenge us to recognize that we have been called to be a Holy People of God, drawn into a grace-filled community blessed by the life-giving presence of the crucified and risen Christ. This is indeed a moment of "Spring" (lencten) when we take time to stop and reflect upon the great gift of Easter. Understanding where we come from, and why we celebrate Lent, should guide us through our journey into Easter.

This is not the time for sadness and mortification, as Isaiah has told us. It is time for us to be what we should be: followers of Jesus of Nazareth. Let's be honest. Most of us, however attached we are to our Christian community and its values, are still primarily concerned about ourselves. "I am only human," we say. But in fact we are less than human. Jesus shows us what it means to be human ... and we hesitate to take seriously the challenge of following Jesus through the Cross into Resurrection. I have too many other interests that need cultivating and protecting.

To follow Jesus more willingly and more courageously is the challenge of Lent. The Season of Lent exists to remind us how we should respond to the gifts God has given us. How we live and relate to God and others during Lent should determine how we will live and relate to God all the year through.

As here in Australia we move into Winter, may the Lent of 2017 be a Christian "Spring": a time of re-birth, for us all.





Prayer at night means summer is bright



Jenny Myers

Jenny has co-ordinated the girls summer camps in South Australia for the past 25 years.

A tireless volunteer who gives up her own holidays every year to support and mentor young women on the Salesian camps. Jenny works full-time at the Royal Adelaide Hospital as a medical scientist undertaking diagnostic investigations for swallowing disorders and diseases of the oesophagus.

The phrase 'red sky at night, shepherd's delight' refers to the anticipation of fair weather the next day (Mt 16:2). At summer camp, our interactive night prayer shapes us with flow on effects. We've come to anticipate a wonderful atmosphere the next day. Really? Yes - incredible isn't it?

With curiosity, I ponder how changing the format of night prayer from written and spoken prayers to interactive prayers can have such a profound and immediate effect.

I first noticed this change about five years ago and put it down to 'an above average friendly group of campers'. It just keeps happening. Now, I don't exactly expect to see growth in campers' and leaders' behaviour and interactions, but I do and it fills my heart (and I suspect the hearts of all) with joy. You know that glow you see emanating from a woman during pregnancy or young ones in love? Well, it's the same glow we see emanating from campers. They're fully alive!

I'm not really sure how all this comes about. Is it the Holy Spirit working through us? Or is it because we're open to change? Or both? The Girls' Salesian Summer Camp S.A. is still evolving (even after 27 years)! We're proactive for change to meet campers' needs. Yet as I write, I am aware that mention of a Salesian Summer Camp will conjure in your mind images of campers singing crazy bus songs, enjoying fun 'n games and carefree days at the beach. These contribute richly to growing happiness in young people. But lasting happiness is deeper, isn't it? As leaders at a Salesian camp, I do believe we are called to do much more ... for the 'lasting' bit. Is it because we answer that call - that we nurture Salesian spirituality in leadership formation and we empower and encourage young people to be active in the world as Pope Francis urges (ref: Aust SB, Spring 2016), that we are blessed? We do strive to be like Don Bosco: we let young people know they are unique and special and we support and encourage them to be the best they can be. These are truly enriching. At the Girls' Salesian Summer Camp S.A., I think we achieve tangible results for intangibles, like more self-confidence and understanding, through our interactive night prayer. It is intentionally 'a call to action'.

Mikayla & Madeline thoroughly enjoyed the summer camp experience and are thrilled with their new found friends. Mikayla has already started lobbying for a repeat next year! Regards M.M.

Way before camp, our youth and adult leaders share their awareness of a need amongst young people such as: a need for respect; making good choices; or to nurture self-esteem. We ponder and pray to enable daily prayer themes to form that will call us to action. e.g. last year's were: 'We respect ourselves, day and night' (Mon). 'We respect each other, caring and listening' (Tue). 'We respect property, both near and far' (Wed). 'We respect earth and all its gifts' (Thu). We respect our community: family, friends and all we meet' (Fri).

The sky's the limit for ideas of a hands-on interactive component – no two have ever been the same, be it a creative visualisation or interactive presentation. The format enriches night prayer in a way that invites each person to choose to live the particular value that will bring them and others happiness. It is clear to me: it works because it's personally relevant to each camper. It engages each of us. Following night prayer, the traditional Salesian 'goodnight' is given by a senior leader.

This summer, nurturing self-esteem was the overarching theme, with daily themes like: 'BELIEVE you are a special individual. Wanting to be someone else is a waste of who you are.' Deeply enriched by "your heart of imperishable beauty ... in God's sight is very precious" (1 Peter 3:3-4). Another: 'PRAISE, loudly and often', saw each of us, at the start of the day, being invited to note down a person's gifts. That night, in ping-pong fashion, we each in turn received praise and gave thanks for our gifts. With each day, self-esteem grew through awareness that positive thoughts can replace negative ones and by building each person's awareness of their value and worth. Our departing camper awards said it all: 'We are confident in who we are'. Parent's comments suggest a lasting impact.

Each year, like Don Bosco, we start from where young people (and we) are. We are open to God working through us and with us. We let our night prayer spill over into the next day. Having shared this with you, I still don't fully understand – I am in awe and wonder of the personal and spiritual growth for campers and leaders alike. The atmosphere at camp is wonderfully good and difficult to describe. Prayer at night means summer is bright.



Thank you so much for taking care of my girls at camp. They say it was a very special experience in their lives and they would go again at any time! They were thrilled at having such spirited young leaders around them. I know they'll become role models for them in the coming years and that is the most important input for teenage girls. So please give my warmest greetings to all the organisers and leaders.
Best regards S.V.



Joanne Mulvihill

Photography by Joanne Mulvihill, volunteer camp leader, Salesian Youth Network S.A.



Just a quick message to you guys. I send my heart filled gratitude to you for making my daughter Shanaye's time at camp such a wonderful experience for her. She has come home beaming and full of life. Thank you one and all.
From Shanaye's Dad.

Great Pacific celebrations



Fr Petelo and Fr Greg

New Pacific Delegation

Inauguration of the Pacific Delegation: (L to R) Fr Mathew Vadakkevettuvazhiyil, Fr Greg Chambers (Provincial), Fr Petelo Vito Pau, Fr Taisali Leuluai, Fr James Kyaw Hoe

Recently Fr Bernie Graham, Vice-provincial, accompanied the Provincial, Fr Greg Chambers, to attend the inauguration of the Pacific Delegation and preside over religious professions and the installation of new Superiors. Here Fr Bernie gives an account of these events.

On Sunday 29 January 2017 the parish of Sinamoga/Moamoa, Samoa, celebrated the feast of its patron St John Bosco. It was also the occasion for the official inauguration of the new Pacific Delegation within the Australia-Pacific Province, and the installation of the first Delegate and his Council.

Fr Greg Chambers, Provincial of the Australia-Pacific Province (AUL), was the celebrant of the Eucharist during which he inaugurated the Delegation and installed the Council. Fr Petelo Vito Pau, Rector of the Alafua community and Parish Priest of the Sinamoga/Moamoa Parish, is the Delegate, and the members of his Council are Fr Taisali Leuluai, Parish Priest of Leauva'a, Samoa, Fr James Kyaw Hoe, Director of Novices and Vice Rector of the Formation Community in Suva, Fiji Islands, and Fr Mathew Vadakkevettuvazhiyil, Priest in Charge and Parish Priest of Avondale in Auckland, New Zealand.

This new Delegation is comprised of the Salesian communities and missions in the three countries of Samoa, Fiji Islands and New Zealand:

- ◆ Alafua, Samoa: 7 Confreres, 4 Aspirants, 3 Parishes, 1 Technical Centre and 1 Aspirantate/Pre-Novitiate
- ◆ Salelologa, Samoa: 4 Confreres, 1 Secondary College, 1 Technical Centre and 1 Parish
- ◆ Massey, New Zealand: 5 Confreres, 2 Parishes
- ◆ Suva, Fiji Islands: 3 Formators, 6 Students in Formation, 6 Novices, 1 House of Formation and Novitiate (Note: A new parish will be entrusted to the care of this community during 2017)

Present for the this important celebration, in addition to all of the confreres working in Samoa, were Fr Bernie Graham, Vice Provincial of the AUL Province, Fr Nick Castelyns, former long-time missionary in Samoa, and all of the young Samoan confreres who were home from Fiji on summer vacation, many of the Salesian Sisters based in Samoa and representatives of other religious families in Samoa.

The Salesian mission began in Samoa in 1979, in Fiji Islands in 1999 and in New Zealand in 2009. This Inauguration marks another significant step in the consolidation of the Salesian presence in the Pacific, following only months after the establishment of the new Vice Province of Papua New Guinea/Solomon Islands (PGS) in 2016.



First and Final Religious Professions



Final Professions in Samoa

On the feast of St John Bosco, Fr Greg Chambers, Provincial of the Australia-Pacific Province, received the Perpetual Professions of two confreres of the Province, Br Atonio Lealea and Br Sinapati Ioane in a celebration held in St John Bosco Parish Church, Sinamoga in Samoa.

In addition to this celebration eight other confreres renewed their temporary vows in ceremonies across the Province, six confreres in Samoa and two in Australia.



Renewal of Temporary Profession in Samoa:
Back: Br Anetelea Silao, Fr Greg Chambers (Provincial), Fr Petelo Vito Pau (Delegate), Br Kevin Fiame, Br Leiofi Sueina;
Front: Br Falefa Elia, Br Eteuati Milo, Br Sanele Faapue



Celebrations in Fiji

On and around the feast of St John Bosco two significant celebrations also took place at Don Bosco House in Suva, Fiji Islands when Fr Bernie Graham, Vice Provincial of the Australia-Pacific Province, presided over short ceremonies of installation and welcome.

In the first ceremony Fr Pselio Tevaga was installed as the new Rector of the Formation community at Don Bosco House, and Fr James Kyaw Hoe was installed as the new Director of Novices. Fr Pselio has come from Samoa where he had been the Director of the Pre-Novices at Alafua. Fr Jim has been Vice Rector and Dean of Studies at Don Bosco House and now takes on the additional role as Director of Novices.

In the second ceremony six young men were welcomed to their novitiate year and entrusted to the care of Fr Jim. Saimoni Koronibuto from Fiji and Foua Tea Peato, Damian Taofinu'u, Sefilino Fanaliko and Silao Moeloa all from Samoa had completed their Pre-Novitiate at Alafua in Samoa, and have been joined by Duc Nguyen who had completed his Pre-Novitiate in Clifton Hill, Australia. In the reflection on the scripture passages of the Call of Samuel 'Speak Lord, your servant is listening' and the Call of the first Disciples 'They left everything and followed him', the new novices were encouraged to be great and deep 'listeners' throughout the novitiate experience, listening to themselves, their Formators, the message of the Constitutions and particularly to the Word of God, and, in imitation of the disciples, to step out with courage to follow the call of Jesus to this particular form of discipleship which is Salesian consecrated life.

L-R: Fr Pselio Tevaga, Rector, Fr Bernie Graham, Vice Provincial, Fr James Kyaw Hoe, Director of Novices

Ceremony for the commencement of the Novitiate, Suva 2017:

L-R: Duc Nguyen, Simioni Koronibuto, Foua Tea Peato, Fr Bernie Graham, Fr James Kway Hoe, Damien Toafinu, Silao Moeloa and Sefilino Falaniki



Education and culture

The Salesian presence in South Sudan



James Comino

Brother James Comino is a Salesian working in South Sudan

They built sixty primary schools spread over all the dioceses of South Sudan to give approximately 13,500 children access to education. Now they are launching a new agricultural project, to teach people how to cultivate their land which is rich and fertile. All this is the work of two Salesian missionaries in South Sudan, Fr Vincenzo Donati and the Salesian Brother James Comino, who recently gave an interview to ANS.

Brother Comino, tell us how the schools project started

There were many difficulties at the beginning. Many people were sceptical, but the then Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez, gave us the green light to start in 2013. This summer, at the meeting of the young people in Colle Don Bosco, we had the pleasure of informing him personally that sixty schools had been opened.

We thought of building schools because when South Sudan became independent in 2011 it had been reduced to a pile of rubble. All infrastructure, hospitals, churches, schools and social works had been almost totally destroyed. Given the inability of the government to solve the problem we thought that the best way to help this fledgling nation was by education, which is the basis of everything. At the time of independence, 70% of the children did not go school.

We decided on one plan for all the schools – four classrooms and an office for the teachers. We asked the local communities to provide the school furnishings. We received great help from South Korea, where I had been a missionary for thirty years. The Mission Office took our project to heart and launched a campaign to help. The programme is still going on to this day. Sixty schools have been built. They are not owned by the Salesian Congregation but are managed directly by the dioceses.

How does the schools project work?

We carry out inspections and with the help of two experts we decide where a new school is needed. The materials – iron, wood and concrete – come from Uganda and it takes about four months to build a school. Right now 13,500 children attend our schools and in them we promote the spirit of Don Bosco.

Have you any plans for the future?

One of the big needs in South Sudan is agriculture. 80% of vegetables, fruit and cereals are imported from Uganda where there is the same type of land that we have in the south. So we thought that if young people learn to work the land, by the time they grow up it will be bearing fruit. The project we are starting this year is to open an Agricultural School. I came here to Italy to try to find resources and agricultural tools, and perhaps one or two agricultural experts who might come to South Sudan to do an analysis of the soil, etc.

The government of South Sudan has given us 2500 hectares to start the agricultural school. It could become a model to show the people that their land is rich and can provide a lot of food. An appeal from the United Nations a few months ago warned that in South Sudan about four million people are at risk of hunger.

It is a question of creating a mindset to entice people to cultivate the land. It could also be a great response to those who are driven by hunger to emigrate, by making them independent and aware that they can cultivate the land and meet their food needs without having to look elsewhere. The food is there, under their feet.

Salesian missionaries operate leprosy program, hospital in Tonj

Salesian missionaries have been working in Tonj, a town in the northwest region of South Sudan, for several years. Their focus has been on providing education and social development services for poor youth through the operation of primary and secondary schools and youth centers. In addition, the missionaries operate several medical clinics, including a leprosy clinic, as well as a hospital.

Today, 20 families of people affected by leprosy are living in a place called Laicok where Salesian missionaries have constructed buildings that have space for each family in their own room. Salesian missionaries, with assistance from Salesian Sisters from the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, have been providing care and aid to those suffering from leprosy. They are provided shelter, food, clothing and other sanitary items like soap as well as medical care.

The leprosy program was started by Father John Lee who arrived at the Salesian mission in Tonj in 2001. He remained until 2008 when he went away on a trip to South Korea. It was there that doctors discovered Fr Lee had cancer, and he passed away 14 months later. During his time in South Sudan, Fr Lee constructed an outpatient clinic and made repairs to the primary school building. He also brought band instruments from South Korea and trained more than 70 young boys and girls. The youth band is well-known in South Sudan and even traveled to South Korea in 2012 to perform.

A new hospital named for Fr Lee was opened in Tonj in late July 2014 after four years of planning and construction. The current facility consists of maternity and surgical wards and a residence for medical and administrative staff. The hospital was fully operational in 2015. Volunteer doctors from Italy provide the medical care at the hospital.



“Medical care is a very important part of Salesian work around the globe,” says Father Mark Hyde, executive director of Salesian Missions, the U.S. development arm of the Salesians of Don Bosco. “Salesian missionaries care for the sick in more than 90 clinics and hospitals in the more than 130 countries we serve. Many of the hospitals and clinics are located in rural areas where access to medical care is limited.”

Source: InfoANS

The Salesians in South Sudan are working with people who are living in extreme poverty. Financial help can be sent to them via



Salesian Missions Australia

PO Box 264 ASCOT VALE Vic 3032

Phone: (03) 9377 6060

Email: salmiss@salesians.org.au

www.salesianmissionsaustralia.org.au

Salesian Jubilarians 2017

We warmly congratulate and honour our Salesian Jubilarians for 2017, and publicly thank them for their many years of tireless service and dedicated witness to our Province, Congregation and Church.



Fr John Murphy Senior
75 years of Religious Profession
31 January



Fr Joe Pulis
65 years of Religious Profession
31 January



Br Noel Hannabery
60 years of Religious Profession
31 January



Fr John Murphy Junior
50 years of Religious Profession
31 January



Fr Michael Court
40 years of Religious Profession
31 January



Fr Martin Tanti
25 years of Religious Profession
31 January



Fr Bob Curmi
70 years of Religious Profession
19 March



Fr Michael Ledda
50 years of Priestly Ordination
20 March



Fr Mathew Vadakkevettuvazhiyil
25 years of Priestly Ordination
7 May



Fr Peter Kerin
40 years of Priestly Ordination
14 May



Fr John Briffa
60 years of Priestly Ordination
7 July



Fr Joe Binh Dinh
25 years of Priestly Ordination
11 July



Fr Julian Cavarzan
65 years of Religious Profession
16 August



Fr Jose Pazheparambil
25 years of Priestly Ordination
26 December

SALESIAN APPOINTMENTS FOR 2017

PROVINCE/DELEGATION APPOINTMENTS

Br Michael Harris,

Re-appointed as Provincial Councillor and Delegate for the sick and elderly for a Second Term, 2017 - 2019

Fr Petelo Vito Pau,

Appointed as Delegate for the Pacific for 2017 - 2019

Fr Taisali Leuluai (Economer),
Fr James Kyaw Hoe (Formation and Missionary Animation) and
Fr Mathew Vadakkevettuvazhiyil (Salesian Family and Youth Ministry), appointed as Delegation Councillors for 2017 - 2019

Fr Joe Pulis,

Assistant CHADSTONE

Fr Phil Gleeson,

Re-appointed as Rector for a Second Term CLIFTON HILL

Fr Sefo Mulipola,

Theology Studies at CTC

Fr Leo Choi,

Assistant Priest ENGADINE

Fr Julian Cavarzan,

Retired ITALY NORTH EAST PROVINCE

Fr Martin Tanti,

Appointed as Rector LYSTERFIELD

Fr Owen Mason,

Assistant Priest LYSTERFIELD

Fr Aleki Piula,

Administrator of Massey Parish, Auckland, during 2017 MASSEY

Br Peter Nguyen Minh Duc,

Practical Training ALAFUA

Fr Jan Walenciej,

Appointed as Rector ST MARYS

Br Jeff Miller,

Practical Training, ST MARYS

Br Noel Hannabery,

Assistant SUNBURY

Br Barry Parker,

Teacher & Assistant SUNBURY

Fr Pselio Tevaga,

Appointed as Rector SUVA

Fr Jim Kyaw Hoe,

Appointed as Director of Novices SUVA

Br Sinapati Ioane,

Theology Studies PRS SUVA

Fr Mika Leilua,

Parish Priest of new Parish of St John Bosco SUVA

COMMUNITY APPOINTMENTS

Fr Petelo Vito Pau,

Re-appointed as Rector for a Second Term ALAFUA

Br Kevin Fiame,

Teacher Training at National University of Samoa

Fr Filipino Kapeli,

Pre-Novitiate Director

Fr Taisali Leuluai,

Parish Priest of Leauva'a

Br Eteuati Milo,

Teacher Training at National University of Samoa

Br Anetelea Silao,

Practical Training SALEOLOGA

Fr Shane Reade,

On loan to Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes for 2017

Fr Peter Varengo,

Provincial Secretary ASCOT VALE

Fr Chris Ford,

Salesian Studies BERKELEY, UNITED STATES

Fr John Murphy,

Re-appointed as Rector for a Fourth Term BRUNSWICK

Br Dat Phung,

Theology Studies at CTC and Assistant Bursar BRUNSWICK

Fr John Prest,

Assistant BRUNSWICK

Philippines: The Don Bosco Boys' Home and Vocational Training Centre



The Don Bosco Boys' Home and Vocational Training Centre was founded on February 1998 as a charitable institution for the marginalized boys and out-of-school youth of the islands of Panay and Negros. The institution has two sectors, namely, the Boys' Home, and the Vocational Training Centre.

The Boys' Home aims at helping the young help themselves so that they may become good Christians and honest citizens, as taught by Don Bosco. The Boys' Home is, therefore, a centre that undertakes spiritual and corporal works of charity directed to children from indigent families, street children, orphans and abandoned boys, of ages 10 to 18 years. The boys stay in the centre where they are provided with adequate board, lodging and playgrounds to guarantee their physical health. They are enrolled in the nearby schools for their academic studies, but they have a study hall, a library and internet access in the centre. They have a program of some manual work of cleaning and gardening. And lastly, they are also provided with the time to pray and the opportunity to live out their sacramental lives.

Upon finishing their high school, those boys who want, may enrol in our Vocational Training Centre, while the rest return to their families, villages or communities.

Our Vocational Training Centre, in line with the tradition of Don Bosco, is an institution that seeks to provide livelihood or employment for out-of-school youth. The trainees are taught to meet global standards of the world of labour, but they also follow a program of character building and Christian formation.

Our Vocational Training Centre is an institution that is accredited by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority of the Philippines, and as such, it can issue the National Certificate I and II for Shielded Metal Arc Welding, and the National Certificate II for Motorcycle and Small Engine Servicing. Because the training is competency based, the students graduate as soon as they show competence and this allow our institution to graduate as many as 75 trainees in a year.

With some thirty boys in the Boys' Home and 75 trainees in the Vocational school, hopefully we, the five Salesians and the five lay staff, are able to touch the lives of about a hundred youth per year. Obviously it is not very much. But at any rate, Don Bosco is leaving a mark in the island of Panay.

Cambodia: Transforming the lives of students with disabilities



Young people from Don Bosco Technical School and Children Fund, Kep, Cambodia

On 31 January 2017, the Don Bosco Technical School and Children Fund of Kep Province had the official opening of the institute for children and youth with special physical disability. This is the first educative project in Cambodia that will offer such an opportunity. "It is not a school for disabled people. It is a 'normal' school where disabled people will be integrated", said Fr Albeiro Rodas, Rector of the Institute in Kep.

In this way, Don Bosco Kep will be a model for the Cambodian educative system to integrate children and youth who are physically challenged, including other Salesian projects in Cambodia that would prepare their own campuses for the physical access of disabled and elderly people. Just to change from stairs to ramps and include lifts to high towers, makes a big change, providing a real possibility for inclusion of people in any educative centre.

It is also a Project that guarantees the preference of the Salesians of Don Bosco for the poorest, the most vulnerable and those at risk. Children and youth with special physical conditions belong to the marginal groups in Cambodian society. Many of them are kept in their poor homes, unable to attend school or prevented from getting a dignified job, while others are used as beggars in Cambodian streets, beaches and tourist spots.

Cambodian society has the duty to integrate all its citizens that are physically challenged and it can be done just with the construction of physical access in public places, schools and factories, while educating Cambodians on their acceptance and integration.

This is the message that Don Bosco is sending to Cambodian society with the Project "Transforming the Lives of Students with Disabilities" at the Don Bosco Foundation of Cambodia at Don Bosco Technical School and Children Fund of Kep Province. This is made possible by a donation of USAID through its Program "American Schools and Hospitals Abroad" (ASHA) and Salesian Missions of New York.



Fr Aguedo Paloma SDB

Fr Paloma is the Rector of the Don Bosco Boys' Home and Vocational Training Centre at P.D. Monfort South, Dumangas, Iloilo in the Philippines

Pakistan: Young Salesian martyr

The heroic guard who on 15 March 2015 prevented a suicide bomber from entering a crowded Catholic Church in Lahore, Pakistan, sacrificed his life to avoid a large scale carnage in the place of worship. Two suicide bombers exploded themselves near St John's Catholic Church and the Protestant Christ Church, some 600 metres apart, in Lahore's predominantly Christian neighbourhood of Youhannabad on Sunday as the faithful were gathered inside. In the attack on the two churches, claimed by Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan Jamaatul Ahrar (TTP-JA), 17 people died and more than 70 were wounded.

Akash Bashir, the heroic security guard at St John's Church, was a past pupil of the Don Bosco Technical Centre (DBTC) located in Youhannabad. Akash Bashir was standing together with another security guard at the main gate of the church, checking those who entered. The suicide bomber approached the entrance and tried violently to get past the two young guards. When Akash stopped him he noticed the explosives hidden under his jacket. He grabbed hold of the attacker and the lower part of his body was blown off in the explosion, but saved the lives of many other people. His identity was confirmed on March 17 as details of the story of what happened gradually became clear.

The funeral of Akash Bashir and others was held on 17 March. Akash's father said that his 19-year old son had always aspired to be a great man. "His mother once asked him to stop standing at the church's gate. He replied that he wanted to make people safer and did not care for his own life," the elder Bashir said. He said that Akash and his sacrifice should be remembered.

Father Francis Gulzar, the parish priest of St John's Catholic Church, said the first anniversary of the terrorist attack on two churches in the Youhanabad area of Lahore marked the beginning of a movement to seek sainthood for Bashir. "Akash is our hero; his bravery saved more than 2,000 people inside the church," said Father Gulzar. "He has inspired local Christian youth and now many are joining the church's security," he said.

Very recently (6 January 2017), Father Francis Gulzar has written a formal letter to the archbishop of Lahore, His Grace Sebastian Shaw, asking that the cause for martyrdom of Akash Bashir be forwarded to Rome to be considered by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. The most credible life witness is a martyrdom



Akash Bashir

Akash Bashir, the heroic security guard at St John's Church, was a past pupil of the Don Bosco Technical Centre in Youhannabad. He prevented a suicide bomber from entering a crowded Catholic Church in Lahore, Pakistan. He sacrificed his life to avoid a large scale carnage in the place of worship

Don Bosco Middle School
 Application Form

Student's Name: Akash Bashir
 Father's Name: Bashir Ahmed
 Birth Date: 22.6.1994
 Religion: Christianity
 Contact Number: 9981 9432717
 Last Class Passed: 7th
 Previous School: R.C.C. Community Middle School
 Work Experience: House assistant about wedding
 Medical Problem: N/A

Important!

Letter of Good Moral Character from Parish Priest or Pastor (for Christians)
 Letter of Good Moral Character from Imam (for Muslims)

Observations

Signature of Applicant: Akash
 Signature of Parents: [Signature]

Akash Bashir's application to the Don Bosco Middle School in Youhannabad, Lahore in Pakistan

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Sr Kim Phuong's First Profession



Each one of us must choose a journey for our own life. A journey that only you have to carry out. Sometimes on the journey others walk with you, but sometimes you have to walk alone and continue on the journey that you have set out. Long journeys begin with small steps. Indeed, to take a small step requires the inner strength, the courage and the spirit to explore the unknown adventure. To choose a journey for your own life is not so easy.

Three years ago I made up my mind to follow the voice that whispered in my ears and I didn't know what the future would hold for me. All I knew was that I was in the hands of the Person (Jesus) that I had fallen in love with. I heard the call and I stepped out of myself to respond. I knew this journey would have lots of difficulties, but with perseverance I believed the result would be a hundredfold. I want nothing, I desire nothing except the love of God. I want to bring with me at the end of my life the love of God and the good deeds that I have done for others.

Finally my wish was granted. On 3 December 2016, my journey of being an FMA (Salesian Sister) just began - the day of my first FMA profession. Wow! How many years had I waited for this moment! But when that moment arrived it didn't seem real to me, it was like a dream that carried my body and soul to heaven. Everything that happened on my first FMA profession day turned out perfectly for me. I am so grateful for the love that God has for me, and God knows where my heart belongs.

My desire is to become a fully alive person. My passion is to become an 'FMA' wanting to live the joyous life that God has called me to live. Mother Maria Mazzarello said "joy is the sign of a heart that really loves the Lord. We must never lose sight of our day to day journey of the great surrender". I believe God's grace will help me and I will have the strength and competence to go through all the obstacles in life. With St Teresa of Avila I pray to let nothing disturb me or make me afraid in following Christ.

*"Let nothing disturb you;
let nothing make you afraid;
all things pass;
but God is unchanged.
Patience is enough for everything.
If you who have God, you lack nothing.
God alone is sufficient".*

My dream is the driving force for me to look forward to the future with hope and trust that God will use me as He already has a plan for my life. "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you" (John 15:16). May the love of God's fire within me allow me to go forth to bear much fruit in my life and mission.

Salesians and Salesian Sisters walking together with the young

The annual meeting of the General Councils of the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians was held at Salesian General House in the afternoon of 18 January 2017. Members focused discussions around the theme of upcoming 15th Synod of Bishops for October 2018, 'Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment'.

Presided over by the Rector Major Fr Angel F. Artime and Mother General Sr Yvonne Reungoat, the 30 participants spent six hours meeting in joint prayer, mutual listening, life sharing and meal. The documents outlining the agenda of planned Synod of Bishops concluded with 15 different questions. These questions were sent not only to the Bishop Conferences, Roman Curia and Major Superiors but also open online to youth around the world. The questions were presented, commented on and studied during the first part of the meeting. Sr Maria Teresa Spiga, Sr Runita Borja and Fr Fabio Attard offered their converging ideas. Then all participants, both in groups and in assembly, shared the suggestion of a possible joint Salesian journey during the two year period of 2018 Bishops Synod preparation and beyond.

Some emerging inspiration for joint action:

- ◆ As Salesian Family we are very grateful for this Youth, Faith and Vocation centred Synod occasion.
- ◆ One joint letter of the Rector Major and Mother General for the Synod preparation.
- ◆ How to reach to those 'far away youth from the Church' as our main mission frontier
- ◆ Wonderful opportunity for us to live, work, walk together with the local Churches and share our Charism.
- ◆ Listen together to the youth .
- ◆ Need to form better vocational accompaniment and vocation culture building.
- ◆ Share this journey with the whole Salesian Family and our Lay Mission Partners
- ◆ Youth and Faith focused Synod path can wake up the best Salesian energies, to be more present among the young.

After a family meal and final words of the Rector Major, Mother Yvonne took this occasion for giving thanks to all Salesians who accompany spiritually the Salesian sisters in 1400 communities around the world with the sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation as well with spiritual guidance.

Two more Sisters join the South Pacific Province



Sr Claudia



Sr Regina

We welcome Sr Claudia back among us! Sr Claudia is also destined for the community in Henderson, Solomon Islands. May your journey be blessed and your life as FMA be an inspiration to all you live and work with. Sr Claudia will remain in Australia until her residency and work visas are finalised in the Solomon Islands.

We welcome Sr Regina among us as she arrived in our province on Sunday, 8 January. Sr Regina will join the community of Henderson, Solomon Islands. We wish you all the best, Sr Regina, and hope that your ministry among the people of that beautiful country will be a fruitful and joyful one.

First experience with Don Bosco summer camps



It was an exciting experience for our novices Salome and Lutita, to participate in the summer camps - hopefully the first of many - at Dromana. These camps were efficiently led by about 30 Salesian leaders who brought the usually quiet beach side area of Safety Beach alive with their cheerful, enthusiastic and truly Salesian spirit of joy and youthfulness.

It was a great experience for them to be part of those days where anyone who entered the ground of Don Bosco Camp Dromana could not help but be caught up in the Salesian Spirit of youthful energy and joy - the spirit of Don Bosco and Mary Mazzarello.

Moments of prayer and liturgy, Salesian good-nights and good mornings, heaps of singing, chanting, games of various intensities, beach games and amazing and creative activities, brought out the very best in these young people, many of whom came to the camp as strangers and ended up friends for life. Well done everyone!



International meeting of Salesian Mission Offices

I participated in a meeting of the Salesian Mission Offices, which was held at the Salesian Generalate in Rome, in mid-January 2017.

The aim of the gathering was to study deeply the emerging themes of mission, to share ideas and best practices and to reflect together in the face of common challenges.

Organised by the Salesian Department of Missions in cooperation with the Economer General, there were 60 participants from 32 countries on 5 continents: Salesians and lay people involved in Mission Offices, and bodies like Don Bosco Network (DBN), as well as representatives of the various departments involved.

The conference was held at a time when the world today is plagued by uncertainty. "Trouble spots" are numerous and many countries are struggling with their own financial and other crises.

That the poor are still with us is an underlying reality. There are about 450 million children who live in poverty; they spend their lives trying to survive.

Further, millions of children are deprived of their childhood because they must take care of their siblings, carry water for the family, work to bring money home, live on the street. And millions of children suffer from war and violence.

It has been estimated that everyday about 40,000 children die from lack of food, malnutrition, disease, lack of clean water and inadequate sanitation.

Don Bosco's Salesians are in 131 countries which include many of the world's "trouble spots."

They are helping people live better, more decent lives. Their focus is on youth, assisting them through education to live decent productive lives and to acquire the skills to secure employment.

While the Salesians cannot solve all the problems in the developing and often troubled areas, they are making a contribution. They welcome assistance from outside to help cover costs, provide resources, etc.

Both Fr Ángel Fernández Artime and Br Jean Paul Muller, in underlining the importance of continuing this mission to the poor and often abandoned youth, spoke about the importance of securing assistance for the training of Salesian personnel in very poor countries.

Donations for the education and training of Salesians is, of course, 'religious' and as such, under Australian Taxation Regulations, does not qualify for tax deductibility. Nevertheless, it is an expenditure that is necessary for the sustainability of the work. Quite simply, if there are no missionaries, there are no missions!

We invite donors to Salesian Missions to consider this intention and also as a possible consideration for a bequest. These days not everyone is in a position to give financial support. Don Bosco often spoke about the great power of prayer. Praying is something we can all do, calling on God to support those "in the field."

Finally, I found the conference a stimulating and inspiring gathering. I was pleased to meet colleagues from around the world and to share ideas with them. On a personal level, I was honoured to be invited to Pope Francis' early morning Mass a few days before the conference.

Michael Lynch

Br Michael Lynch SDB is the Director of Salesian Missions Australia based in Melbourne. Michael is always on the lookout for opportunities to tell people of the good works done by the Salesians around the world. He is pictured here giving Pope Francis a copy of the 2017 Australian Salesian Calendar and Missions Newsletter

Record numbers at this year's WA Summer Camp



The WA Young Salesians Summer Camp in Dwellingup brought together campers and organisers for a week of fun outdoor activities and reflection.

By
Caroline
Smith

More than 100 young people descended on Nanga Bush Camp in Dwellingup recently for a week of sport, outdoor activities, reflection and Mass, as part of the WA Young Salesians' Summer Camp.

The event – held from Monday, 9 January to Friday, 13 January – drew record numbers, with 98 campers and 22 leaders in attendance, a marked improvement on previous years, according to Camp Coordinator Graham Maher.

“This was our 27th year as a camp, and it was the largest single camp in terms of numbers in that time,” he said.

“We went as low as 15 campers four or five years ago, so bouncing back has been a great milestone for us. All the leaders are very enthused about seeing the numbers increase.”

An important focal point during the week was the celebration of Mass on Monday and Thursday, with Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB officiating for the second occasion.

“There was no specific theme for the camp this year, but our Masses had themes: on Monday, it was ‘Being a neighbour to one another’, where the Mass included the Good Samaritan reading,” Mr Maher said.

“On Thursday, Mass focused on the idea, ‘I will take care of you’, indicating that God will always be there for you, no matter what else is going on in your life.

“Having the Archbishop there to celebrate Mass provides a kind of validity to what we’re doing over the week.”

The WA Young Salesians – and their summer camps – hold a particular importance for Archbishop Costelloe, as they are connected to the Salesian order of which he is a member.

The Salesian Order was founded in the mid-19th century by Don Bosco, an Italian priest whose teachings and works focused on helping young people and bringing God into their lives.

Mr Maher said his own experience as an attendee of the camps showed him the profound effect it could have on young people over the week.

“I attended for the first time when I was 17 years old. One of the kids from my parish wanted to go but their parents didn’t want them to attend alone, so I decided to go too,” he said.

“But I was too old to attend as a camper, so I joined as a leader instead. Being there, I just loved being surrounded by so many people. I became coordinator three years ago.

“It’s amazing to see the kids grow over the course of the five days, especially since many of them don’t know each other when they first arrive.”

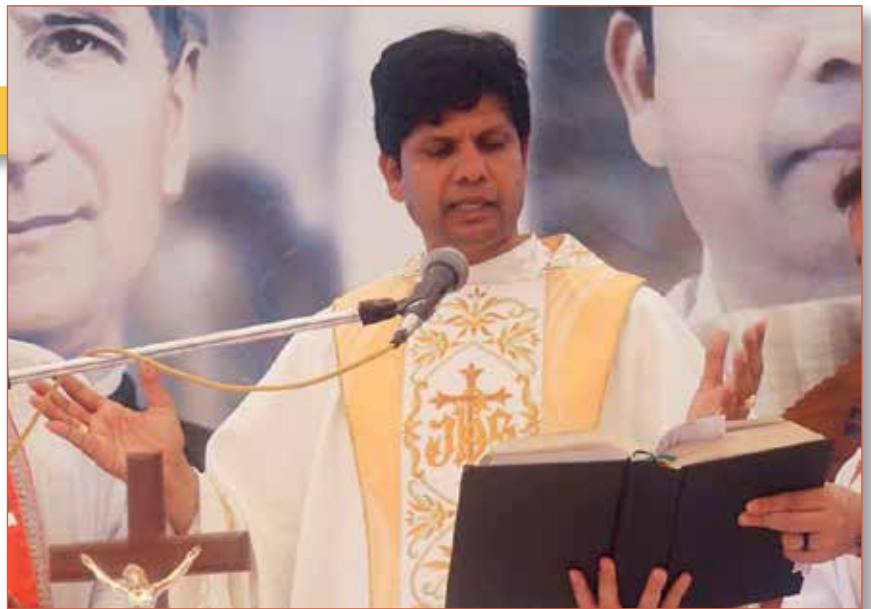


**Archbishop
Timothy
Costelloe
SDB**

More than 100 young people descended on Nanga Bush Camp in Dwellingup recently for a week of sport, outdoor activities, reflection and Mass, as part of the WA Young Salesians' Summer Camp.

Pakistan

The first Pakistani Salesian priest



Fr Noble Lal, the first Pakistani Salesian priest, ordained on 24 May 2016, thus tells us about himself: "I felt a call to serve the Lord since my childhood".

I was born in Chak 36 S.B. Sargodha, in the province of Punjab. We are 9 siblings, myself being the fifth in the family. I was baptized in the same village in the parish church of St Joseph the Worker.

My father was working in the parish church as a gardener and by visiting the parish I got acquainted with religious sisters and priests. Therefore, right after finishing my high school, I went to the diocesan seminary but due to several reasons I could not continue there and I returned home.

While staying at home I finished my bachelor degree in political science. Meantime I kept on searching the will of God in my life. I continued to attend the Sundays and Tuesday masses of St Anthony in my parish. Our parish priest Fr Francois, a missionary from Belgium, continued to pray for me. He kept on guiding me. Once, I remember, I had a group of friends in my village of the same age. All of them were working in a nearby brick factory and some were day labourers. They were curious to know about the word of God. I remember, one evening they knocked on my door and asked me to teach them catechism, but I refused. They came a second time, and I refused them again, but the third time I accepted. I realized, perhaps God was sending them to me to teach them. With this intention I began to teach them catechism and also prepare them for first communion.

Since my parish priest was aware of all these happenings, he suggested that I join a religious order but I was not attracted to anyone. Eventually he introduced me to the Salesian Society of St John Bosco. He told me Salesians are working in a same way as I am doing for the boys. These words caught my attention and I decided to visit Lahore where the Salesians were working with young people. I met Fr Hans and Fr Miguel. They interviewed me and allowed me to join them.

On 10 August 2004, I officially entered Don Bosco Technical School and Youth Centre in Lahore. After one month of living with the Salesians, I became interested and decided to continue. I was inspired by the untiring zeal, love and passion of Fr Hans Dopheide for the young. The youthfulness of Fr Miguel and his initiatives for the young people really touched my life. Lastly I met Fr Peter who visited Don Bosco Technical College and Youth Centre. After staying one year in Lahore, I was asked to go to Quetta Don Bosco in order to have the experience of a different school apostolate. I enjoyed my time there with Fr Peter and with Fr Julio.

Finally both communities recommended me for the pre-novitiate in the Philippines in 2006. After finishing my whole formation – my novitiate, post-novitiate studies and theology – in the Philippines, I came back to Pakistan. On 24 May 2016, feast of Mary Help of Christians, I was ordained in the Sacred Heart Cathedral, Lahore, by Bishop Sebastian Shaw.

I chose my priesthood motto from the Gospel of John 21,17: 'Lord you know everything, you know that I love you'. These words of St Peter's confession in front of Jesus remind the humility and unworthiness of Peter. Yet he was asked to take care of Jesus' sheep. In a similar way, I found myself unworthy to be the first Pakistani Salesian, but God and Don Bosco asked me to lead his sheep, to love and offer my life for our Pakistani youth.

This is my main priority now. I am assigned as spiritual moderator for the boys in Lahore, Don Bosco Technical School. I am happy and I am assured God wanted to use me for the mission of St John Bosco in Pakistan. I have the passion and love for our Pakistani youth and I want to elevate their social status in the country in Don Bosco's way. May the Lord help me!

Every 12th of the month the EAO Salesian Family members are invited to pray especially for the young and fragile Delegation of Pakistan. We pray for more Salesian consecrated vocations in this most western country of our Region.



My missionary vocation is the best gift I have received

“When I think about the beginning of my missionary vocation, I recall always how, as a child, my mother used to call me to do something: ‘Please come and do this or that.’ Whenever Mum called I would stop whatever I was doing and I would try my best to do what she asked me to do. My missionary vocation is similar to this call.”

I remember that as a post-novice I had asked to be sent to the missions. Three of my companions were sent to Papua New Guinea but I was not. This made me ask myself several times, “Why was I not sent?” Yet, I always nurtured my missionary vocation. I kept alive the missionary fervour burning in my heart by giving my very best in all the tasks assigned to me as a practical trainee and then as a student of theology.

Finally, in my final year of theology, my Rector informed me that I had received a double gift: my application for ordination to the priesthood had been accepted and that I would be sent as a missionary to Timor Leste. But my missionary vocation was immediately tested by fire. In 1992 I arrived in Timor when there was a very strong movement for independence from Indonesia.

Actually, it was a miracle that I was given the permission to enter Timor but, when we respond to God’s call, He takes care of the rest. Soon civil unrest broke out and many of our houses were burnt. My Provincial asked me to accompany our people who were fleeing the violence that was engulfing the country. There was total chaos. We lost contact with everyone. Some confreres even thought I was already dead and had offered masses for my eternal repose! I lived for months with Timorese refugees in Australia. But I never doubted God’s loving protection for us all.

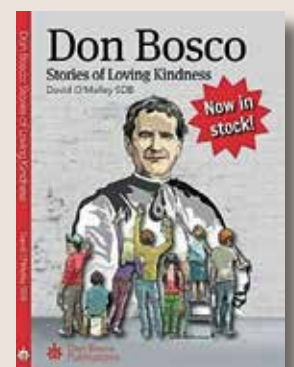
Through the years I have faced many difficult and even life-threatening situations but I never regretted being a missionary. I initially thought that being a missionary meant preaching, teaching, etc. After 25 years I now realise that being a missionary is more about patience, humility and kindness. Oftentimes I would meet people whom I do not even recognise and they would tell me: “Thank you for helping me come closer to the Lord” because I had ministered to them as young people so many years back!

Indeed, I can really say that my Salesian priestly and missionary vocation is the best gift I have received from our merciful God. When God calls us we should not be afraid to respond. He will take care of the rest!

Worth a read Don Bosco: Stories of Loving Kindness

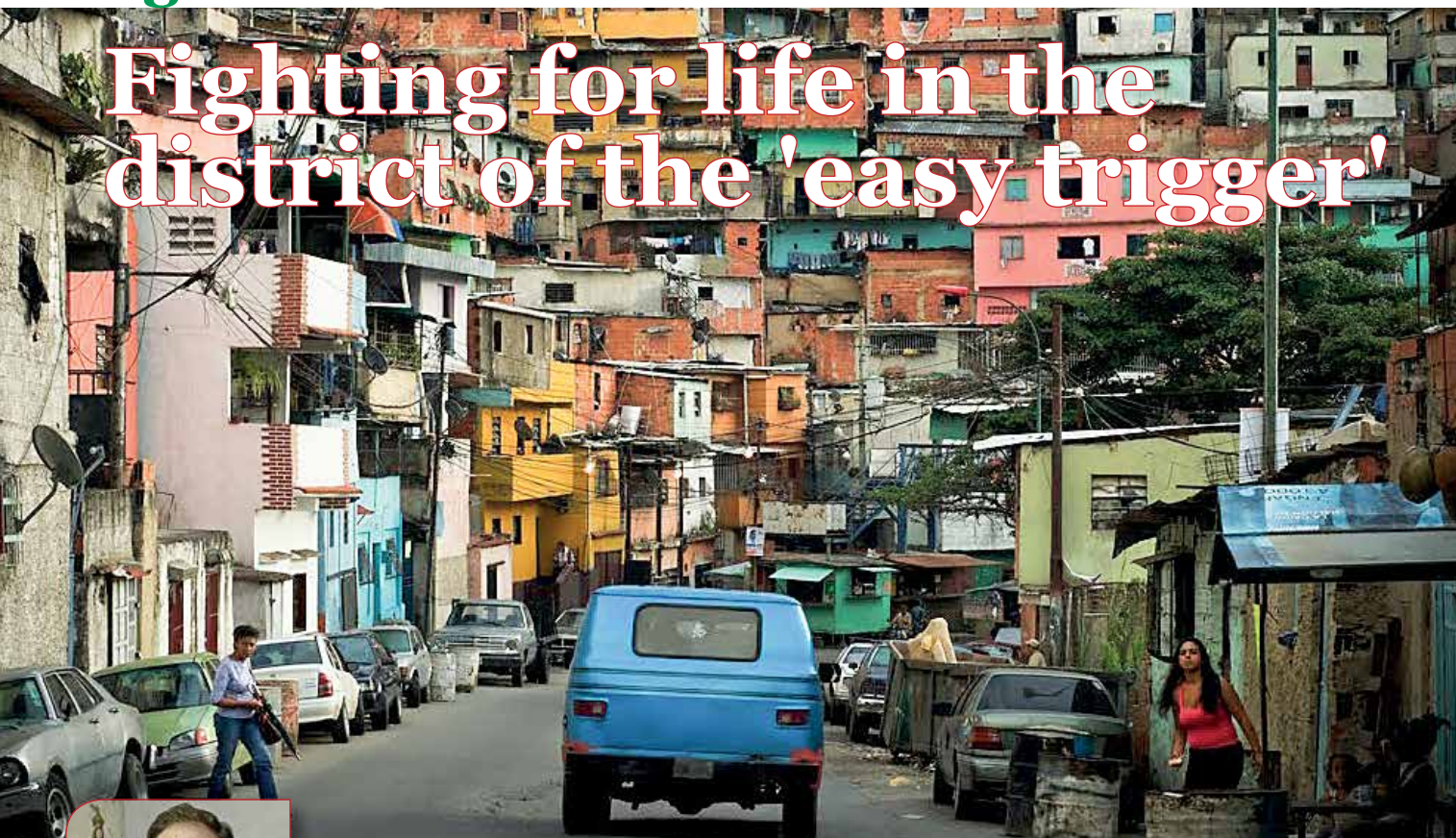
'Loving kindness' is one of the three founding principles of Don Bosco's approach to accompanying and educating the young. In times when harsh and uncompromising discipline was the norm, his philosophy was radical.

In this book, David O'Malley SDB offers a collection of stories from Don Bosco's life demonstrating loving kindness in action, and showing the impact it has on the creation of community. This collection of inspiring stories makes a valuable resource for those who work with the young. The book was launched on the Salesians' founder's feast day, 31 January 2017.



Argentina

Fighting for life in the district of the 'easy trigger'



Father Frederick Salmeron

Fr Frederick 'Chingui' Salmeron, a 29 year old Salesian with a diploma in drug prevention, works with the young people in one of the most dangerous districts of Rosario, Argentina

Fr Frederick 'Chingui' Salmeron, a 29 year old Salesian with a diploma in drug prevention, works with the young people of the Ludueña district, one of the most dangerous of Rosario, Argentina. Here people live 'in the shadow of death', but he, with other Salesians, keeps the community alive.

He says: "I got to know the problem of drug addiction when I was studying in Cordoba, working in the villas miseria, where the Salesians were trying to bring a friendly presence and a real help, especially to the young people who are at greatest risk. Drug addiction destroys people and their families. The first thing to do is to be with the young people, talk to them, share some of their experiences, play football and gain their confidence. This will make it possible for them to allow themselves to be helped and to start again, because left to themselves they will not be able to do so."

What are the young people of Ludueña like?

There is a lot of life in the area and a desire to grow. There are a lot of young people and they have no quarrel with us. There is goodness in each one and we learn a lot from them. However, they are living in an environment that brings out the worst in them. There is a lot of domestic violence, child labour, male chauvinism, abuse, drugs and death. For a long time, here, the Church was far removed from the poor areas, but then something began to move.

Is there malnutrition?

Yes, in some cases, especially among small children. We are not able to respond adequately with the meals we give because we do not have enough. However, we continue to work with determination in the hope that everyone in the area may find access to dignified work.

Is there a high mortality rate?

There are many honest people who are frightened by the violence and the 'normality' of death. There are also families who have lost a loved one but do not have confidence in justice and want to take it into their own hands. Others are so crazy that they see death as a normal means. Society looks to the police and the prison system as a way of repression. The system does not want the culprits to be rehabilitated, but prefers to see them rot in jail.

Lorraine is a pupil of the Don Bosco school. She says: "These guys cannot find work and often they do not succeed because they have not finished school. It is the beginning of a chain of rejection that is repeated, bringing them to total marginalization. But they also have dreams. There is goodness in their hearts and there are families that struggle every day to feed their children.



Brazil – Joint educational project at the shrine of São José benefiting hundreds of children and teenagers

Solidarity is one of the most important and essential values for all human beings. Zygmunt Bauman observed in his famous book 'Liquid Love' that our culture no longer considers commitment as a value. But the truth is that "we came to this world as brothers and sisters. And we walk, joining hands and facing each other." This is the kind of solidarity the Manaus Salesian Youth Ministry has implemented for the benefit of hundreds of children, adolescents and young people.

This year the young people of the Salesian Youth Ministry organized a special solidarity project. At the Shrine of São José in Manaus they donated educational material to about 320 children. The project, which is taking place for the second consecutive year, was inspired by Don Bosco "who dedicated his life to young people, giving them love, affection and an evangelization which led them to God and to a holistic education."

The initiative was carried out at the beginning of the courses, since the teaching material is expensive and many poor families cannot afford it. The aim was to collect the basic school materials to be distributed to children of the communities near the Shrines (Mary Help of Christians, Queen of Peace and St Hedwig of Silesia, and other nearby locations).

In addition to receiving school kits, the children and teenagers also benefited by participating in games and songs, and other preventive health activities, such as dental care. Their parents also participated in the project of solidarity and received a training session.

Within the Project of Solidarity Education, Salesian Youth Ministry has prepared a series of activities, which will begin from March, to help children and young people in public schools. These will include Portuguese lessons, Mathematics and Biology and will be given by students of the Federal University of Amazonas and the University of the State of Amazonas.

"I ask everyone," Pope Francis once said, "to remember two things: human dignity and the common good."



Ivory Coast – "Peace cannot merely be the absence of violence; it must become a project for the future"

Fr Xec Marquès SDB, born in Ciutadella de Menorca, in Spain, left as a missionary to Africa in 1992. He was in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Togo, Benin, Guinea Conakry and now he is in Ivory Coast. From the city of Duékoué, one of the areas of the country most severely hit during the civil war, he explains how he sees the situation of the youth in a moment when some peace and hope is being breathed, even though "42% of the population live under the poverty line, and poverty might reach 63%".

Fr Marquès observes "The situation of the youth in Duékoué, is marked by the wars of 1997 and 2011. Last year there were the first presidential elections after the electoral crisis of 2011, despite the fact that through a boycott a part of the population continues to support President Gagbo (...). When a country has been marked by war, the first thing one notices is the lack of acknowledgement of the results achieved by the supporters of those in power".

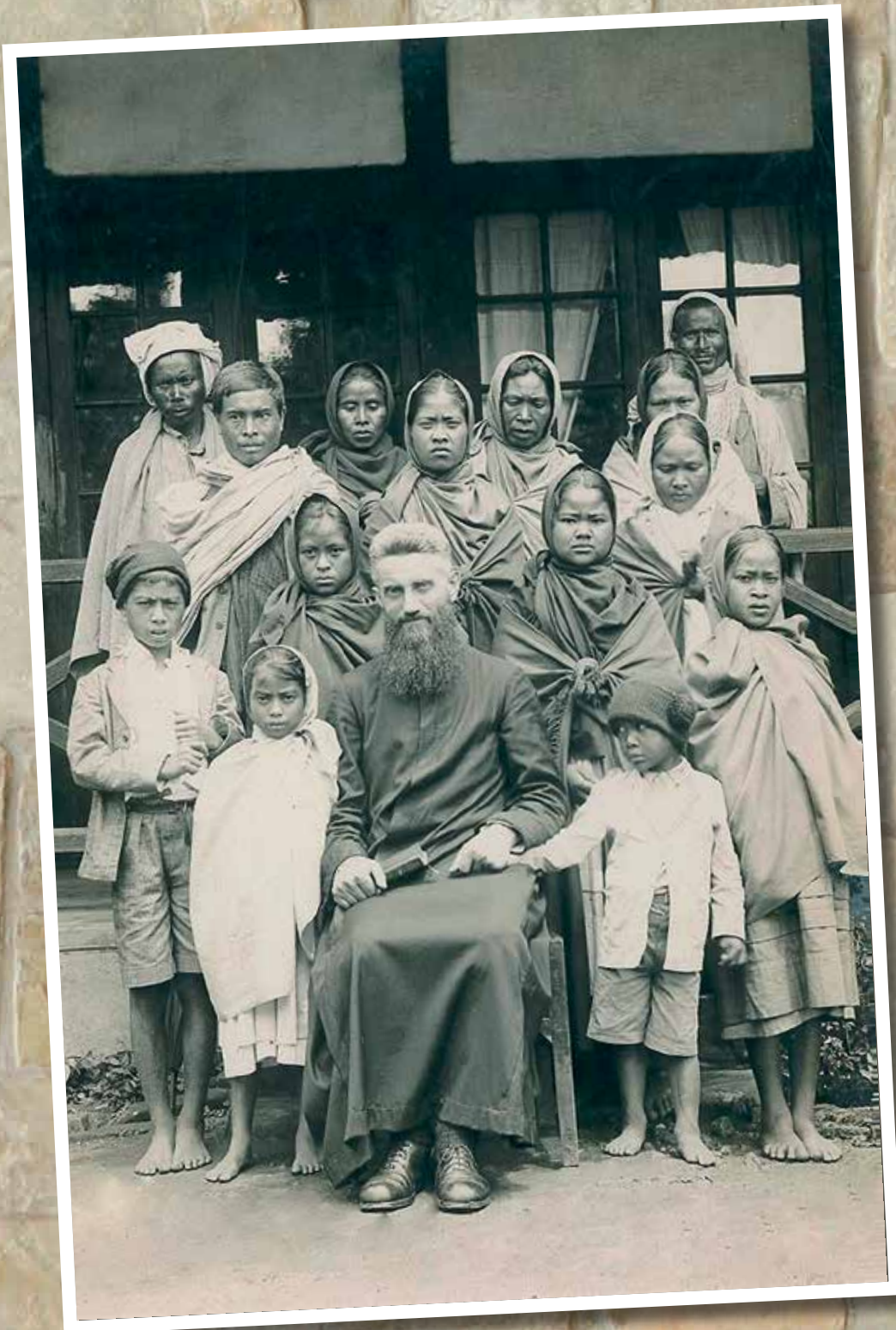
The young in Ivory Coast speak of war. Perhaps the peace and tranquillity that surround them are of those who do not want or who cannot help it, because every day one has to find food, to pay for the school of the children, to cure the sick and, if possible, to save some money.

The children of the Handicraft and Rural Vocational Centre share the same mentality. "For them there is no culture of planning, but rather the culture of the immediate; i.e. a vocational diploma to enter the labour market. This challenge gives them purpose, but at the same time it also contributes to make them indifferent to the political life of their country. Many are of age to vote, but very few participated in the latest elections, because they do not believe any longer in politics and politicians," Fr Marques explains.

"For Salesians and educators the challenge is to know how to promote the values of social conscience and of political responsibility and not to let oneself be carried off by the inertia of the urgency of every day. Peace cannot merely be the absence of violence, it must also become a project for the future," Fr Marques concludes.

A historical snapshot

Salesians in the Shillong mission, India - 1 August 1937



On 1 August 1937 in the Salesian mission of Shillong where he worked, the Salesian missionary, now Servant of God, Fr Costantino Vendrame, officiated at fourteen baptisms. "In the photo there is a beautiful and profound theological symbolism," commented Fr Pierluigi Cameroni SDB, Postulator. "In one hand the Servant of God holds the Bible and in the other he has the hand of a child, to signify the union of the human and the supernatural."