

EX ALLIEVI Newsflash

YEAR 12 - ISSUE 51 - 5 OCTOBER 2023

*Religious and Social magazine
of the World Confederation of Ex-students of Don Bosco*



English Edition

(translations: Sandra Pistilli)



Ángel Fernández Artime is Cardinal



SOCIETÀ DI SAN FRANCESCO DI SALES

SEDE CENTRALE SALESIANA

Via Maria Ausiliatrice, 32 - 10152 Torino

Il Rettor Maggiore

Prot. 23/ 0319
Turin, 12 July 2023

To all Salesian Brothers (SDB)
To the members of the Salesian Family Groups

Dear brothers and sisters,
may my sincere, fraternal and affectionate greeting reach each and every one of you.

After the unexpected news (especially for me), with which the Holy Father Francis also announced my name among the 21 people he has chosen to be "created" Cardinals of the Church in the forthcoming Consistory on 30 September, thousands of people must have wondered: and now what will happen? Who will lead the Congregation in the near future? What steps await it?

You can well understand that these are the same questions that I too have been asking myself, as I thank the Lord with faith for this gift that Pope Francis has given us as Salesian Congregation and as the Family of Don Bosco.

What great affection the Pope has for us!!!

Therefore, while I thank God for this gift that belongs to the entire Congregation and to the Salesian Family, I express my gratitude to Pope Francis, assuring him, on behalf of all the members of our great Family, of more fervent and intense prayer. Prayer which, as I said, will always be accompanied by our sincere and deep affection.

About half an hour after the announcement of the appointment during the Angelus prayer last Sunday, 9 July, the Holy Father gave me a letter in which he asked for an urgent meeting with him, to agree on the necessary timing of my service as Rector Major for the good, above all, of the Congregation. The Pope himself, in the aforementioned letter, spoke to me explicitly about the preparation and the next General Chapter scheduled for 2026.

So, yesterday afternoon, Tuesday 11 July, I was received by Pope Francis. I had a fraternal dialogue with him. As always, the Pope showed himself to be attentive, cordial, a profound admirer of Don Bosco's charism and particularly affectionate. Feelings that, on my own behalf and on behalf of the whole Salesian Family,

I reciprocated. I am now in a position to share with the Salesian Congregation and our Family spread throughout the world, the dispositions that the Holy Father has communicated to me. Here they are:

- We will be able to bring forward the 29th General Chapter by one year, that is, in February 2025.
- The Pope has decided that, for the good of our Congregation, after the Consistory of 30 September 2023 I may continue my service as Rector Major until 31 July 2024, that is, until the conclusion of the summer plenary session of the General Council.
- After that date I will submit my resignation as Rector Major to take up from the hands of the Holy Father the service that he will entrust to



SOCIETÀ DI SAN FRANCESCO DI SALES
SEDE CENTRALE SALESIANA

Via Maria Ausiliatrice, 32 - 10152 Torino

Il Rettor Maggiore

me. This is what the Pope himself has communicated to me.

- In accordance with art. 143 of our Constitutions, which gives the dispositions in the case of "cessation from the office of Rector Major", having been called by Pope Francis for another service, my Vicar, Fr Stefano Martoglio, will assume the government of the Congregation ad interim until the celebration of GC29.
- The 29th General Chapter will be convoked by me at least one year before its celebration, as established by our Constitutions and General Regulations (Reg. III), and my Vicar, Fr Stefano Martoglio, will preside over it.
- Throughout this time we will continue to follow the programme of the established sexennium for the animation and governance of the Congregation. In order to complete all the planned extraordinary visitations (including those for the year 2025), the Rector Major, having heard the opinion of the members of the General Council, will proceed to appoint a further extraordinary visitor. In this way it will be possible to arrive at GC29 with a complete and updated picture of the situation of the entire Congregation
- For all other elements related to the General Chapter, I will provide detailed information in the letter of official convocation of GC29.

In conclusion, it remains for me to say and answer another question that many of you will have: what task will the Holy Father entrust me with? Pope Francis has not yet told me. Besides, with this wide margin of time I think it is the most opportune thing. In any case, I ask all of you, dear Brothers and members of the groups of our Salesian Family, to continue to intensify prayer.

Especially for Pope Francis. He himself expressly requested it at the end of the private audience granted to me. And I also ask you to pray for what we will experience this year as a Congregation and as Salesian Family.

Lastly, I also ask you to pray for me, placed before the prospect of a new service in the Church which, as a son of Don Bosco, I accept in filial obedience, without having sought or wanted it. Our beloved Father Don Bosco is my witness before the Lord Jesus.

I thank you for the affection, the closeness expressed in these days with the numerous messages I have received from all over the world.

From the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians I send you an affectionate and grateful greeting entrusting each and every one to Her, the Mother, who will continue to accompany and support us.

I feel as if addressed to me the same expressions that Our Lady said to Don Bosco in the dream of the nine years - whose second centenary will be celebrated next year: "In due time you will understand everything". And we know that for our Father this actually happened almost at the end of his life, in front of the altar of Mary Help of Christians in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which had been consecrated the day before, on 16 May 1887.

We place everything in the hands of the Lord and his Mother.

With immense affection I greet you





“Walking together: Changing to continue”

This edition of *EXALLIEVI Newsflash* marks the celebration of the feast of Blessed Alberto Marvelli – past pupil from Rimini, Italy who dedicated his short life to political commitment, social engagement, and pastoral life. He lived the Salesian spirituality in his daily life through prayer, social action, and political commitment in his daily.

The Rector Major, Fr Angel Fernandez Artime states: «*The life of Alberto Marvelli is characterised by generosity, loving-kindness, and prayer. He lived a life which was exemplified by the Salesian Spirituality. Although he died at a young age, he lived a full dedicated life as a good Christian and an honest citizen*».

The social and political commitment of the past pupil and friend of Don Bosco is an important aspect in the life of everyone of us. To be truly committed to Don Bosco, as a past pupil and friend, we need to find ways of taking up our commitment in social and political activities. Solidarity is one of the main aspects of our strategic plan for 2021 – 2027.

I encourage that every past pupil and friend of Don Bosco commit themselves in solidarity action and advocate for political development which are in line with the values enshrined in our statute, such as, life, freedom, and truth.

I also appeal to all Federations and Associations around the world, to engage in social and political commitment and encourage their members to commit themselves to work with young people especially those who are poor, vulnerable, and in need.

This time, next year, in 2024, we will be all gathered in Valdocco to celebrate the [Extraordinary World General Assembly between the 2nd to the 6th October](#). The World Confederation is already preparing the programme and taking care of the organisation. I wish that many countries and Federations are represented from all the four regions, and I encourage you to start your preparation to be present in Valdocco for this special occasion.

The theme of the Extraordinary General World Assembly will be “[Journeying Together: Change for Continuity](#)”. Coming together and getting to know each other is an important moment for the World Confederation.

We also need to understand the needs of today and how we can be more effective in our mission and spirituality in the world of today. Together we can make the changes that ensure that we will continue our mission and spirituality in a world that is continually changing.

Like Alberto Marvelli, we can contribute to changes that are required through living a life gifted by the Salesian Spirituality and committed to the mission with the young who are so close to the heart of Don Bosco.

Bryan Magro
World President

The leaven of the Kingdom



Every year Pope Francis gives us a message for World Mission Day. This year he has chosen a theme based on the account of the disciples of Emmaus in Luke's Gospel (24:13-35): "*Burning hearts, feet on the road*".

These words recall the experience of the disciples of Emmaus described in Luke's Gospel. On the way, they encountered the risen Lord. This encounter inflamed their hearts and spurred them on to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus.

For the Salesians too, October is Salesian Missionary Month. The entire congregation invites us to pray for all missionaries throughout the Salesian world, especially to accompany this year's new Salesian missionaries, who will receive the missionary cross in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco and are sent to all five continents.

The Church is missionary by its very nature, all Christians by baptism are called to give witness to the joy of the Gospel in their lives, to feel a living part of the world, "citizens" fully inserted in temporal reality and co-responsible in it, and contribute to its integral growth by being "*salt, light and leaven*".

They are intimately in solidarity with the world and share the joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties of people today, especially the poor and suffering. They live this year's strena in which the Rector Major invites us to be "*leaven in today's human family*".

When there is no mission, there is no yeast. If the yeast remains alone, it is useless. It must be mixed with the flour that becomes the dough. Christians are leaven not for themselves, but to be sent on mission.

To be an apostle is not to carry a torch in one's hand, to possess the light, but to be the light. The Gospel, more than a lesson, is an example. The message transformed into lived life. (*Christus Vivit* 175).

The value of witnessing does not mean that speech should be silenced. Why not talk about Jesus, why not tell others that He gives us the strength to live, that it is good to converse with Him, that it is good for us to meditate on His words?

I would like to take the word of Pope Francis who encouraged the young people as if he were speaking to each one of us: *«do not let the world drag you down to share only negative or superficial things. Be capable of going against the tide and be able to share Jesus, communicate the faith that He has given you. I wish you to feel in your heart the same irresistible impulse that moved St Paul when he said: "Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel!"»* (1 Cor 9:16). (CV 176).

Do not be afraid to go and bring Christ into every environment! God invites us to go fearlessly with missionary proclamation, wherever we are and whoever we are with. The Lord wants us to be his instruments to radiate light and hope to the world.

Let us take with us burning hearts, eyes open, feet on the road, to make other hearts burn with the Word of God, open other eyes to Jesus in the Eucharist, and invite all to walk together on the path of peace and salvation that God in Christ has given to humanity.

Domenico Duc Nam Nguyen



Don Bosco, Marvelli, the Pope, Fr Artime and... Sport

Dear Past Pupils and Friends,

This issue of *EXALLIEVI Newsflash* comes out on the anniversary of Blessed Alberto Marvelli, but the pages we reserve for our Rector Major are fitting. Great astonishment was caused on 9 July by Pope Francis, announcing a Consistory for 30 September. Even more Salesian amazement on learning that, among the 21 new cardinals, Don Miguel Ángel Artime was announced. For the first time we have a cardinal in our leadership.

Marvelli and Fr Artime! What do they have in common? Among their many spiritual prerogatives, our thoughts went to the... Sport! In Salesian pedagogy, sporting activity has always been seen as a means of moral formation and transformation in the lives of young people. Don Bosco used to say: «Give yourself ample freedom to run, jump and shout as you please. Gymnastic and sporting exercises, music, drama, walks are very effective means to achieve discipline, foster morality, preserve health».

The street, the square are for Don Bosco places of competition, of athletic and sporting encounters. Interesting the challenges he won when as a young student he measured himself against a "professional".

Don Bosco uses the game to instil self-esteem and confidence; it thus becomes a path of education, growth and faith for the young and with the young.

The former student **Blessed Alberto Marvelli** is also a sporty and dynamic young man. *"He loved all sports, but his real passion was the bicycle, which he used as a privileged means for his apostolate and charitable work. On the evening of 5 October 1946, he rides his bicycle to an election rally. He is also a candidate. At 8.30 p.m. a military truck runs him over. He died aged just 28, a few hours after regaining consciou-*



Alberto Marvelli on a bicycle



Rector Major Fr Artime



Don Bosco "footballer" in India

sness" (Fr PIERLUIGI CAMERONI, *Come stelle nel Cielo*, pp. 158-160, Leumann Elledici).

That the current Supreme Pontiff loves sport is well known. In 2014, on the occasion of the celebrations for the 70th anniversary of the Italian Sports Centre and the 100th anniversary of the Italian National Olympic Committee, Pope Francis claimed that: «*Sport is an educational road. I find three roads for young people, for boys, for children. The road of education, the road of sport and the road of work. If there are these three roads, I assure you that there will be no addictions: no drugs, no alcohol. Why? Because school takes you forward, sport takes you forward and work takes you forward*».

But let us return to our Rector Major. From the interview he gave to Angel Expósito and published in the book *Don Bosco oggi* (pp. 47-48, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015) we highlight two passages. «Sport is certainly an educational tool of the first magnitude. In Salesian works it is natural that there is a large space for practising sport.

The fundamental reason lies not only in physical harmony, but also in the great values it contains, such as self-discipline, openness to others, team spirit...

[...] Personally, I have always liked sport. I played a lot of basketball in my youth, and I like walking in the mountains or hiking along the sea cliffs, like in my land of Asturias, and also swimming.

I like to watch some football, especially when it is quality football, but without being too much of a fan; I am a fan of Sporting de Gijon because it is from my homeland and because in my adolescence I was able to see the team more than once in Luanco».

This is how, for once, we all tried to become children again. In the name of sport. Without the need for computers, smartphones and TV.

Pierluigi Lazzarini



Moldova. Oratory of Chisinau



The Holy Father appoints Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime, Rector Major of the Salesians Cardinal of the Church

(ANS - Vatican City) - 9 July 2023

Today, 9 July, after the Angelus and reflection on the Gospel, Pope Francis announced the convocation of the Consistory for 30 September next for the appointment of 21 new Cardinals.



Among the names of the new Cardinals was Rev. Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, the Rector Major of the Salesians.

The appointment of Fr Ángel Fernández Artime is a sign of the trust and hope that the Holy Father Pope Francis places in Fr Ángel and the Salesians of Don Bosco.

The inclusion of the new Cardinals in the diocese of Rome also manifests the inseparable bond between the See of Peter and the particular Churches spread throughout the world. Their provenance expresses the universality of the Church that continues to proclaim God's merciful love to all people on earth.

The Holy Father concluded the audience by inviting everyone to pray for the new Cardinals: *«Let us pray for the new Cardinals, that by confirming their adherence to Christ, the merciful and faithful High Priest (cf. Heb 2:17), they may help me in my ministry as Bishop of Rome for the good of all God's faithful people».*

Fr Ángel was born on 21 August 1960 in Gozón-Luanco, Asturias, Spain. He made his first profession on 3 September 1978, made his perpetual vows on 17 June 1984 in Santiago de Compostela and was ordained a priest on 4 July 1987 in León. Originally from the Province of León, he holds a degree in Pastoral Theology and a Licence in Philosophy and Pedagogy. He was Provincial Delegate for Youth Ministry, Rector of the School atf Ourense, a member of the Provincial Council and Vice Provincial, and from 2000-2006 he was the Provincial Superior.

After being part of the Preparatory commission which prepared the 26th General Chapter in 2009, he was appointed Provincial of South Argentina, based in Buenos Aires.

In this capacity he also got to know and work personally with the then Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, today Pope. On 23 December 2013, he was appointed Superior of the new Province of Mediterranean Spain, dedicated to *Mary Help of Christians*. But before he could take on this new role, on 25 March 2014 he was elected by General Chapter 27 as the new Rector Major of the Salesian Congregation and the 10th Successor of Don Bosco.

On 11 March 2020, he was confirmed by the General Chapter 28 as the Rector Major of the Salesians for the second six-year term from 2020 to 2026.





Spain

Communiqué of the Provincials of Salesian Spain on the creation of Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, Rector Major, as Cardinal

(ANS - Madrid) - 10 July 2023

Yesterday, Sunday 9 July, Pope Francis announced the creation of 21 new Cardinals, including the Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco, the Spanish Salesian Fr Ángel Fernández Artime. Due to this appointment, the Superiors of the two Salesian Provinces of Spain - St James the Greater (SSM), based in Madrid, and Mary Help of Christians (SMX), based in Seville - on behalf of all the Salesians they represent, wish to express as follows:

The Salesians of Spain welcomed with surprise and satisfaction the announcement by Pope Francis that our Rector Major will be created Cardinal in the next Consistory. This news reminds us that the Salesian vocation places us at the centre of the Church and puts us fully at the service of the mission to which the Lord sends us. Our charism leads us to work with young people with a pedagogy and spirituality inherited from Don Bosco. Since our birth, we have felt part of the Church with filial fidelity to the Successor of Peter. Without a doubt, the trust that Pope Francis has placed in the current successor of Don Bosco is a sign of the entire Salesian Family that fills us with joy.



Ángel Fernández Artime was elected Rector Major in 2014 during the 27th General Chapter of the Congregation. In that assembly, the highest governing body of the Salesians, the programmatic words expressed by Pope Francis only a year earlier, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, were very much present in the reflection of the Rector Major: "I am not unaware that today documents do not arouse the same interest of other times, and are quickly forgotten. However, I stress that what I will try to express here has programmatic significance and important consequences. I hope that all communities will provide the necessary means to continue on the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion, which cannot leave things as they are".



Nine years later, Pope Francis' announcement of the creation of our Rector Major as Cardinal confirms us in the task of continuing our commitment, starting from our educational charism, to make visible an outgoing Church, which is a field hospital in which many young people can find an environment inhabited by people who educate, accompany and help to grow in the faith.

We are grateful for the confidence that the Pope has shown towards the Salesian Congregation with this appointment. On behalf of all Salesians, members of the Salesian Family and our educative and pastoral communities, we assure our beloved Rector Major of our prayers at this important time in his life.

Fr Fernando García, SDB
SSM Provincia

Fr Fernando Miranda, SDB
SMX Provincial

Italy



The joy of the Salesian world at the choice of the Rector Major as Cardinal

(ANS – Rome) – 12 July 2023

A few days after the naming of Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, the Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco, as Cardinal, messages of congratulations and encouragement continue to arrive from all over the world and from numerous groups of the Salesian Family, united with the promise of prayers in support of the future Cardinal and his mission, which is increasingly becoming part of the heart of the Church. From the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) to the Past Pupils of Don Bosco, from the Salesian Cooperators to the Past Pupils of the FMA, from the Superiors of the various Provinces – especially those most linked to Fr Á.F. Artime – to the young people on the social networks, there have been many manifestations of affection and support.

Valerio Martorana, Councillor for Europe and the World Confederation of Past Pupils of Don Bosco, spoke of the «great joy for all Past Pupils around the world. It was a cause for joy, gratitude but also temporary “bewilderment” because it is the first time that a Successor of Don Bosco has been created a cardinal. We are certain, as Past



Pupils, that the Church needs the influence of Don Bosco for its evangelising work throughout the world».

«The news that the Pope has included our beloved Rector Major among the next group of Cardinals also has spread immediately among Salesian Cooperators around the world» says World Coordinator Antonio Boccia.

«To the astonishment of the first moments an immense personal joy and that of the entire Association of Salesian Cooperators was then added. The first thought went to the times when the Popes asked Don Bosco for help on matters concerning the Church. Today Pope Francis asks Fr Ángel for a commitment in the Church of our times. As Salesian Cooperators we will not be lacking in support with our prayer».

«We are united in joy with the entire Salesian Family and as Daughters of Mary Help of Christians we assure our fraternal and intense prayer, so that Fr Ángel can express the heart of Don Bosco at the heart of the Church, and bring Light to believers, especially to young people», was instead the immediate reaction of the Superior General of the Institute of the Daughters of

Mary Help of Christians, Mother Chiara Cazzuola, published on the cgfmanet.org website.

For their part, Maria Carmen Castillon, President of the World Confederation of Past Pupilss (FMA), and Margherita Rossebastiano, President of the Mornese ONLUS Association said: *«Congratulations on your appointment as Cardinal! May this new path of your life be rich in blessings, wisdom and strength.*

We are convinced that in your new role within the Church, you will continue to be a beacon of light, spreading the message of love, compassion and hope to everyone you meet. May the Holy Spirit guide you in your new responsibilities as a Cardinal and may you continue to have a positive impact on the lives of countless people around the world!».

And after the messages of congratulations from the Salesian Provincials of Spain – the birthplace of Fr Á.F. Arttime – not long in coming were congratulations from Fr Dario Perera, the Superior of the Argentina South (ARS), the Province that the future Cardinal led from 2010 to 2014, before



being elected Rector Major.

«We all know Fr Ángel's affection for our Province and the closeness he has always had with us», wrote the current Superior of ARS.

«His appointment fills us with joy and is a recognition by the Pope of the Congregation and of Fr Ángel personally.

We are proud that the one who was the first Provincial of our Province is not only Rector Major, but also a Cardinal of the Catholic Church. This commits us to accompany him not only with our affection, but above all with our prayers.

We entrust him to our Mother the Help of Christians».

The festive atmosphere is also echoed on social networks, especially by young people from Salesian circles, who immediately expressed their joy by changing the images of status and profiles and publishing posts and stories with his face and photos of the most beautiful moments they have experienced together with the Rector Major and future Cardinal.

Source: Vatican News, Ispettorìa ARS, Exallievi/e FMA

Spain



THE FUTURE CARDINAL, FR ÁNGEL FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME: "Wherever I go and whatever I am asked to do, there will always be attention to the young, to education, to the most vulnerable"

(ANS – Madrid) – 20 July 2023

«I am still that little boy from Luanco, where I really feel at home among my people and my compatriots. It is essential in life not to forget our roots».

Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, who will be created cardinal in the consistory on 30 September, always speaks with a natural feeling of warmth. The 10th Successor of Don Bosco spoke about his recent appointment as Cardinal and other relevant topics in an interview granted to the *La Lanterna* program of the Spanish Episcopal Conference radio station *Cadena COPE*.

Never before had a superior in charge of a religious congregation been created a cardinal. And, another peculiarity of Fr Á.F. Artime's appointment is that he is not even a bishop. *«I will continue to be the same, with a different responsibility, but profoundly human and solidly grounded»* the Rector Major confided to *Cadena COPE* journalist Angel Expósito.

The 10th Successor of Don Bosco confessed that he had learned of his appointment when the Holy Father announced it at the Angelus, and that he in no way expected it. *«We didn't know anything about it. I was*



looking at a few things with a Salesian Provincial and when they told me I thought there was a mistake».

On 11 July, when the Rector Major was received in audience by the Pope to receive his instructions regarding the steps following this appointment, Fr Á.F. Artime – who has known the Pope since the time they were serving together in Buenos Aires – told him confidently: *«Holy Father, allow me to remind you of one thing: 10 years ago, when you welcomed all the 267 Salesians in the Clementine Hall at the 27th General Chapter (Ed.comment: who had elected him Rector Major for the first term), you said to me: "Hey, Gallego, what have they done*

to you!". And now it is I who am saying to you: *"Holy Father, what have you done to me?"* And I must say that the Pope reacted with genuine, heartfelt laughter».

«A Salesian never stops being a Salesian, right?» the journalist asked Fr Á.F. Artime, who said he *«feels very happy to accompany young people in their life. It is in my DNA, and wherever I go and whatever I am asked to do, there will always be attention to the young, to education, to the most vulnerable, and this is what I will be able to offer, together with my personal style, to my new service, where I will try to give the best of myself, through dialogue and respect for diversity»*.

Other topics were also touched upon in the interview.

Regarding vocational training, the future cardinal reported: *«Don Bosco started the closest thing to vocational training with the first boys in Turin. It had other precedents, such as with St Philip Neri. But that is where the Salesian mission began, where Don Bosco began to teach trades to the youngest ones, where young people of all religions and nationalities end up finding a place in life and where their dignity was valued»*.

Finally, on the issue of migration and refugees, he commented: *«On a day like this, 68 million people are on the move in the world... It is one thing to want to be concerned about security, but we must bear in mind that someone who is simply different is not a danger.*

Because if there is anything I have learned in my travels through the Salesian world, in the 118 countries I have visited, it is how rich diversity is!

It is something that needs to be taken into account and the first thing to get to know is why these people move and why they emigrate. And if there is anyone who knows migration well, it is us Spaniards», concluded the Cardinal designate concerning this situation *«which cannot be forgotten».*

Source: COPE



Salesian Cardinals and Bishops



Foto di archivio - @ Servizio Fotografico Vatican Media

From 30 September next the Sacred College will be made up of 243 cardinals, among whom Pope Francis has also listed the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime. This means there will be 11 Salesians who are members of the College of Cardinals.

Currently 4 are electors and so will have the right to vote in the future conclave: Cristóbal López Romero, Daniel F. Sturla Berhouet, Charles Maung Bo, Virgilio Do Carmo da Silva. Anche Ángel Fernández Artime will be electors.

The other 6 are not electors: Angelo Amato, Tarcisio Bertone, Raffaele Farina, Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, Óscar A. Rodríguez Maradiaga and Ricardo Ezzati Andrello.

As for Bishops, there are 114 in total.

Historically, the first Salesian bishop was John Cagliero (7 December 1884), then chosen as a Cardinal in 1915.



A day of celebration for the Salesian Family: the Rector Major is a cardinal

(ANS - Vatican City) – 30 September 2023

The Ordinary Public Consistory at St. Peter's Square this morning, 30 September 2023, was indeed a celebration of the universality of the Church and a renewal of the thrust of evangelization, during which the Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, was officially created Cardinal.



There was great emotion for the entire Salesian Family when the Holy Father Francis pronounced the official formula for the creation of the 21 new cardinals, and even more so when, face to face with the Rector Major kneeling before him, he imposed on him a purple skullcap and biretta, the cardinal's ring and publicly assigned him the 'Salesian' diaconate of the Church of Mary Help of Christians in Via Tuscolana.

The subsequent moment of embrace of Card. Fernández Artime to the Holy Father was at the same time a symbolic gesture, a sign of fidelity in ecclesial service, and also an expression of concrete closeness and affinity between the two pastors.

Earlier, in the solemn rite which witnessed the first of the 21 nominated cardinals, the Augustinian Card. Robert Francis Prevost, the Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, gave a message of homage and expressed his thanks to the Pontiff on behalf of all.

He emphasized how the cardinalate brings with it honours, but above all responsibilities, and the sense of inadequacy of the new cardinals in the face of the greatness of the service to which they are now called. However, in a spirit of trust in Divine Providence and in the Pontiff's farsightedness, he renewed everyone's adherence to the task assigned, to be carried out with absolute dedication, utmost humility and total loyalty.

After the reading of the new testament passage of the Pentecost (Acts 12:1-11), the Holy Father offered some hints to the new cardinals - valid, which was however, also for all members of the College of Cardinals.

*Many messages of good wishes
and support for the new Cardinal.
The motto he chose is "Sufficit tibi gratia mea"
(My grace is sufficient for you).*

«Before we are apostles - priests, bishops, cardinals, we are "Parthians, Medes, Elamites"... And this should awaken in us awe and gratitude for having received the grace of the Gospel in our respective peoples of origin. I believe that this is very important and should not be forgotten», said the Pope, urging the newly ordained cardinals to preserve «amazement and gratitude» for the action of the Holy Spirit who has reached them in their languages and peoples, through the mediation of so many people: parents, grandparents, catechists...

For this reason, Francis continued, almost as if to suggest a pastoral style of proximity and simplicity, it is important to remember that «*faith is transmitted in dialect*», and that before being «*evangelizers*» one has all been «*evangelized*».

The Holy Father's last mention was of the universality of the College of Cardinals, an expression of a «*symphonicity*» and «*synodality*» that is proper to the whole Church. «*Diversity is necessary, it is indispensable. But every sound must contribute to the common design. And for this, it is fundamental to listen to each other... And the conductor of the orchestra is at the service of this kind of miracle that each time is the performance of a symphony*».



The Holy Father concluded stating that it is precisely the image of the orchestra, concluded, that teaches «*always better to be a symphonic and synodal Church ... in the consoling trust that that we have the Holy Spirit as our master: the inner master of each one and the master of walking together*», who «*creates variety and unity*» and who «*is harmony itself*».

The celebration ended with the Holy Father's Apostolic Blessing for the approximately 12,000 faithful present in St. Peter's Square for this festive day; who, under a still summer sun, then lined up for the traditional 'courtesy visits' to the newly-cardinals in the corridors of the Vatican Apostolic Palace.



Good wishes and Universal support for the new Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime

(ANS - Vatican City) - 30 September 2023

Gratitude, homage, Don Bosco, charisma, young people, Church, celebration, joy, happiness, prayer... These are the most recurrent words in the comments of those who had the opportunity to participate in first person in the celebration of the Ordinary Public Consistory in which the Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, was created Cardinal.

Among the 12,000 jubilant faithful who attended in St. Peter's Square, the solemn ceremony, several hundred were Salesians, members of the Salesian Family or sympathizers with Don Bosco and his charisma - and they did not fail to express it whenever the Pope pronounced the name Ángel Fernández Artime, always accompanying it with a profusion of applause and exclamations.

There were also many personalities who accompanied the Rector Major more closely. Among them, for example, his "colleague" Cardinal Cristóbal López Romero, Archbishop of Rabat, who commented as follows: «Celebrating a Consistory in which the Holy Father creates a Salesian Cardinal is always a reason for joy in the Congregation, because it responds to our charism of being at the service of the Church and the Kingdom of God through what the Holy Father asks of us. It is also a way of expressing our availability to serve the Church and our love for the Pope. This is why today, the day of the creation as Cardinal of the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, is a day of joy and glory for the Congregation.



I believe that Don Bosco from Heaven will be happy that many of his sons, through the episcopate and the College of Cardinals, are faithful to his way of life».

He was echoed by Uruguayan Card. Daniel Fernando Sturla Berhouet, Archbishop of Montevideo, for whom «the creation of Fr Ángel Fernández Artime as a Cardinal is a great joy for the whole Church, but also for the whole Salesian Family, because it is a totally extraordinary fact. It is a gift of Pope Francis to the Church, but also a gift to the Congregation and to the Salesian Family for what the Rector Major means, as the Successor of Don Bosco: it is a fact that speaks of love: of the Pope's love for Don Bosco and his Family, and of the Salesian Family towards the Church».

For his part, the Apostolic Prefect of Azerbaijan, Bishop Vladimir Fekete, SDB, emphasized the "prophetic" dimension of this choice by Pope Francis: «I am very grateful to the Lord for this great day for the Salesian Family and for the entire Catholic Church.

Salesians are known as missionaries of the young, and I am sure that Pope Francis' choice to create Rector Major Cardinal is not only an appreciation for what we are doing for the education and accompaniment of the young and for the service of the Church, but it is also a prophecy. I am sure that this creation as Cardinal of the Rector Major can be a new challenge and a new impetus to bring the Salesian charism even more to the world of youth.

I hope and pray that the creation of the Rector Major as Cardinal can open a new frontier, a new door to bring the Salesian

charism into the education of young people».

Being a feast of the whole Congregation, many Salesian Provincials came from all over the world. Among them, Fr Giovanni d'Andrea, Superior of the Sicilian Province (ISI), said: «It is an important day for the whole Congregation and the Salesian Family, because a Rector Major created Cardinal is an acknowledgement from the Pope to all of us.

Of course, it upsets the whole organization, because the General Chapter, and consequently all the Provincial Chapters, are brought forward, but it is a great joy and a great honour, and we all remain very humble».

«This choice by the Pope means that the Church has confidence in Don Bosco's charism, that our charism is relevant to the Church, for which the choice is made, and today even more so, to promote the education and evangelization of young people. We as Salesians must follow the example of Don Bosco, who was always willing to obey the pastors of the Church.

I am certain that Fr Ángel has been chosen by the Lord and will serve the Church well, as a Salesian of Don Bosco» added Fr Pierre Célestin Ngoboka, Superior of the Africa Great Lakes Visitation (AGL), with full conviction.

The voices of the Congregation were also joined by those of the entire Salesian Family. The Vicar of the Mother General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Sister María del Rosario García Ribas, declared: «It is a beautiful day for the whole Salesian Family, because with the creation of Fr Ángel as a cardinal we are experiencing together an acknowledgement of the Church and the Pope. As Daughters of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarella, we are truly happy for this moment of family and cele-

bration and we are also here to reaffirm that we will also support him with our prayers».

Speaking on behalf of all the Past Pupils of Don Bosco of the World, Bryan Magro, the President of the World Confederation, said: «It is wonderful to be able to stand beside our beloved Rector Major today on the day he becomes a Cardinal. It is a historic moment and we wish him all the best in his service to the Church and the world in the years to come. As Past Pupils of Don Bosco, we wish Fr Ángel our best wishes!».

Lastly, two exceptional personalities who could not be absent on a day expressed their feelings to ANS: Rocío Fernández Artime, sister of the new Cardinal, and Rector Major Emeritus, Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva.

«Ángel is very calm, aware that this is a new stage in his life and he takes it on in a spirit of service. He also trusts in the accompaniment of the Lord. He has also manifested this in the motto he has chosen, in which he expresses all his trust in Providence: *Sufficit tibi gratia mea*. That is why he is calm, and has surrendered everything to the will of God» was the assurance of doña Rocío.

«It is a historic day for the Congregation and the Salesian Family, it is the first time that a Rector Major, who is also in office, is created cardinal. It is also a moment to become aware of being more and more Church. The fact that he is increasingly at the service of the Holy Father expresses exactly this. And we, for our part, accompany him with our prayers», Fr Chávez concluded.



don Stefano Martaglio



don Pascual Chavez



The coat of arms and motto of Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime

(ANS - Rome) - 30 September 2023

The coat of arms and motto of Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime, Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco, were unveiled on the occasion of his creation as cardinal.

Heraldry is a complex and specialised language consisting of a myriad of figures and the coat of arms for a cardinal is a special mark, graphic expression, synthesis and message of his ministry.

In the case of the coat of arms of Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime, SDB, the emblazonment - heraldic description - does not currently carry the shield attached to a styli cross made of gold, placed on a pole, because the Rector Major is not a bishop.

Inside the hooded shield, in the first section the characteristic figure of Jesus the Good Shepherd, found in the Catacombs of San Callisto, in Rome stands out - these Catacombs are entrusted to the care of the Sons of Don Bosco; in the second section, at the top left, the monogram "MA", with reference to Mary Help of Christians, surmounted by a crown of the same colour; in the third, the anchor with two hooks, silver, strung in red.

The shield is stamped with a hat with beads and red tassels, a sign of cardinal dignity. The tassels, thirty in number, are arranged fifteen per part, in five orders of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.



Under the shield, in the silver list, the motto in black capital letters: "SUFFICIT TIBI GRATIA MEA" (My grace is enough for you).

As is noted in more detail in the explanation of the emblazonment of the coat of arms of the new cardinal, the figure of the Good Shepherd in the centre of the shield expresses the centrality of the figure of Christ, "*the true shepherd who leads his people*".

The monogram of Mary Help of Christians recalls the mother to whom Don Bosco entrusted the Congregation and whom he always recommended we pray to.

Finally, the anchor reminds us that Cardinal Ángel FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME SDB is the son of a fisherman from seas around Spain. It therefore recalls his origins; but at the same time, the anchor is also found in the coat of arms of the Congregation, and recalls that Don Bosco himself wanted it as a symbol of the theological virtue of hope.

The episcopal motto, taken from Saint Paul (2 Cor 12: 9), expresses trust in Divine Providence.



Family members



Bryan Magro



don Pierluigi Cameroni

Italy



Feast of Gratitude 2023 around Fr Á.F. Artime

(ANS – Turin) – 26 June 2023

The Salesian Family recalls St John Bosco's name day and the origins of the Feast of Gratitude at Valdocco Oratory on 24 June, the feast of St John the Baptist – since, as it is narrated in the Biographical Memoirs, for the boys "the feast of St. John the Baptist was a special occasion to demonstrate their feelings".

This year's celebration was inevitably affected by the news of the death of the Rector Major's mother, Isabel Artime Garcia, but it was nevertheless celebrated modestly, to express the gratitude of the entire Salesian Family (SF) towards its Centre of unity.

In introducing the day, which saw the involvement of Salesians from various communities in Turin – led by the Superior of the Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta Circumscription, Fr Leonardo Mancini – as well as the various Salesians at Salesian Headquarters, the Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr Stefano Martoglio, stressed the value of the celebration: both as an element of continuity and bond of tradition that takes us back to the origins of the charism, and as an occasion of gratitude which reinforces the unity of the entire SF around the Successor of Don Bosco.

The high point of the day, as usual, was the Mass celebrated by the Rector Major. In his homily he intertwined three guidelines: the figure of St John the Baptist, the tradition of the feast of thanksgiving, and Salesian circumstances today.



Regarding John the Baptist, the Rector Major left aside any secondary aspect linked to his traditional image to get to the core of his mission: "The proclamation of the Lord Jesus. He lived to prepare others for the encounter with the Messiah". A model, that of the Precursor of Jesus, which – he observed – «is valid as an excellent program of youth ministry, diocesan pastoral care, parish pastoral care... of pastoral care in general».

Regarding Don Bosco and his feast, the Rector Major stressed the tenderness of the image of those first boys, students and past pupils of the Oratory at Valdocco, who felt the need to thank the one who was "a father" for them. From this relationship of real and continuous closeness between the hearts of Don Bosco and those of the young, he drew the shared responsibility of the young people themselves in the birth and then the development of the Congregation, first, and then of the Salesian Family. «People will never remember how good we were at running this school, or college, or home... they will remember the heart, if they felt loved».

Finally, he thanked everyone for the affection and prayers in his regard, especially on this occasion of celebration, but extended thanks to all his confreres, to the members of the SF and the lay colleagues who carry out Don Bosco's mission with him. Then, he concluded by reminding everyone of the secret of Salesian life: «At the centre there is God and the Lord Jesus, at the centre there is service and life as a gift».

Only at the end of the Mass did Fr Á.F. Artime pass on to all those present the news of the death of his mother, which he had learned about during the morning. With great dignity, and at the same time opening his heart to his confreres and friends, he confided that from that moment he felt he was an orphan, and then thanked people already in advance for all the manifestations of attention and affection, and even more for the prayers offered on her behalf.

The previously prepared fraternal programme then continued in a measured and balanced way due to the circumstances. Fr Guido Errico, from the Formation Sector, presented the programme of activities in the Sangalli hall at Valdocco.

Fr Martoglio, for his part, spoke to Fr Á.F. Artime in brotherly tones, assuring him of his personal closeness and that of all the confreres around the world.

The video of homage to the Successor of Don Bosco, "*Cara Rettor Maggiore*", was then screened, followed by the delivery of some tributes to him: from the community of Valdocco, from Salesian Headquarters, as well as from the Past Pupils of Don Bosco – the first initiators of this beautiful tradition of 24 June. On this occasion Bryan Magro, President of the World Confedera-

tion of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco, gave the Rector Major a painting of the Pakistani Past Pupil and Servant of God Akash Bashir, promising at the same time the enduring loyalty of all Past Pupils around the world.

After this, several Salesians from Salesian Headquarters were honoured by the Rector Major for their proven Salesian fidelity:

- Fr Sanjay Aind and Bro Dun Nam Nguyen, for the 25th year of their profession;
- Fr José Antenor Velho, for the 60th anniversary of his profession;
- Fr Luigi Fedrizzi, for the 65th anniversary of profession;
- Fr Hilário Passero for the 75th anniversary of his profession;
- Fr Juan Marciano Olivares Mayorga for the 60th anniversary of ordination;
- and Fr Elio Torregiani for the 75th anniversary of his profession and the 65th anniversary of his ordination.

Before concluding, the 10 newly appointed Provincials who arrived in Turin for their orientation and formation course, renewed, on behalf of all, their condolences to the Rector Major, and then sang the hymn to Don Bosco in his honour.

The day ended, finally, with a community time of agape and fraternity.



Israel



The Rector Major presides over the Celebration of the Centenary of the Consecration of the Basilica of Jesus the Adolescent in Nazareth

(ANS - Nazareth) - 4 September 2023

The Salesian Family of the Holy Land and the Province of the Middle East (MOR) inaugurated the celebrations for the centenary of the consecration of the Basilica of Jesus the Adolescent in Nazareth, on Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 September 2023.

The celebrations were presided over directly by the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, accompanied by, among the many present, the Regional Councillor of the Mediterranean region, Fr Juan Carlos Pérez Godoy, and the MOR Provincial, Fr Alejandro León.

Also present were the Vice Provincial of MOR, Fr Emanuele Vezzoli, the Bursar Fr Pietro Bianchi, the rectors and a representation of the Salesians from the SDB houses in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Cremisan and Bethgam I, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Salesian Cooperators, **Past Pupils and friends**. The large basilica was full of lay faithful, many families with children and religious.

The Saturday night prayer vigil, animated by a youth group in an atmosphere of recollection and artistic music and songs, took place as a sequence of short meditations and "personal resonances" on the virtues typical of Jesus during his years in



Nazareth (prayer, work, humility, obedience, purity).

The Rector Major, due to a delayed journey, was only able to address a quick greeting to all those present after the vigil, and during dinner he interacted with all the Salesians with great familiarity.

Giving the "good morning" talk on Sunday morning, he touched on these points: the joy of being there, Gratitude to the Lord and to those - consecrated and lay - who have been his ministers-instruments in these 127 years of Salesian presence in Nazareth; the encouragement to look beyond the current contingency, marked by the contraction in the number of personnel - which nonetheless invites humility; the importance of the significance of the presence.

In this regard, he confided the following detail: «When I was a student of theology in Santiago de Compostela, the then Rector Major Fr Egidio Viganò came to visit and said that the Congregation would always do everything to maintain its presence in three places of absolute value: Jerusalem, Rome and Santiago.

Today I wanted to be here among you to reiterate that same decision; I would add that for us Viedma, in Argentina, where the tombs of Cardinal Giovanni Cagliero and

Saint Artemide Zatti are located, is also of similar value».

The solemn morning concelebration in the basilica gave prominence to the white statue of the Jesus the Adolescent and liveliness to the polychrome stained glass windows. Songs and prayers rose up from the white pillars of the building and came down from the painted arch vaults. The Rector, Fr Munir Al-Ra'y, extended cordial words of welcome to the Rector Major, the Latin Bishop of Galilee, Mgr Rafiq Nahra, the Greek-Melkite Bishop, Mgr Yusef Matta, and all those present, and invited everyone to remember the great founders and benefactors of the basilica, in particular Mr and Mrs Foäche and Abbé Caron.

In his homily, the Rector Major, with a tone of great spontaneity, joy and simplicity that struck everyone, expressed the joy of being together as a large Christian family around the Adolescent Jesus.

In the First Reading (1 Kings 7-12) the young king Solomon asks God for prudence and wisdom to carry out his task, in the service of God and his people. This is what every Christian, every young person must ask for in prayer, he observed. Today, unfortunately, many leaders seek only power, and lack true wisdom.

The Gospel passage of the twelve-year-old Jesus among the doctors in the temple (Lk 2:41-52), then invites us to always be ready for God's surprises and above all to take Jesus' answer as addressed to each one: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?", that is, "that I must do his will?".

Each person, Fr Á.F. Artime exhorted everyone to ask themselves in all circumstan-



ces what was God's plan for them. *«If we maintain this attitude, we are sure that in 100 years' time the Christian family, together with the Salesians and the Salesian Family, will be here celebrating its second centenary».*

For his part, Mgr Rafiq Nahra expressed his gratitude for the Salesian educational and pastoral action in the 5 presences of the Salesians and the 3 of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in the Holy Land, which he had the opportunity to personally appreciate, and he hopes that they will continue, with the effectiveness of Don Bosco's pedagogical and spiritual system, to serve the youth in Israel and Palestine, so much in need. He also congratulated the Rector Major on his appointment as Cardinal, announced on the same day as the similar appointment of the Patriarch of Gesuralemme, Bishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa.

At the close of the celebration, the MDR Provincial addressed words of gratitude and good wishes, ending with a reference to the apostolic exhortation *Christus Vivit*, in which Pope Francis points to the example of the holy imitators of the Adolescent Jesus, including Teresa of Lisieux and Dominic Savio.

A festive reception followed under the portico, open to the wonderful panorama of the city of Nazareth, with souvenir photos, the moving reunion of former students from the 1970s with the directors at the time, Fr Vittorio Pozzo and Fr Gianmaria Gianazza. In the theatre hall, "Cangao Nova" projected a video on the history and spirituality of the centenary event, following the track of the booklet edited by Fr Gianni Caputa.

Italy



THE RECTOR MAJOR REMINDS NEW PROVINCIALS: "Our mission is to take care of life wherever it presents itself"

(ANS - Turin) - 26 June 2023

The formation and accompaniment course for 10 newly appointed Provincials concluded on Friday, 23 June, the liturgical memorial of St Joseph Cafasso. This event, which lasted two weeks, allowed the Provincials to receive fundamental pointers for the successful completion of their service, through working sessions with all the members of the General Council, and even more so thanks to conversation and immediate discussion with the Rector Major and his Councillors. Participants expressed their satisfaction at the end of the course.

It was precisely the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, who offered the appropriate key to understanding the course, in his homily at the final Mass of the course, which he celebrated in the St Francis de Sales chapel in Valdocco. «You have done a very beautiful and demanding job, and you now return home with the awareness that you need to take great care of that part of the Congregation that the Lord has entrusted to you» the 10th Successor of Don Bosco began.

Then, mentioning a recent encounter he had had with an elderly former Oratorian student of Valdocco, he recounted how the



latter had confided in him that he thought the chapel of St Francis de Sales – that is, the church where he was presiding at the Eucharist – was more beautiful today with all its marble than before with its plaster from Don Bosco's time. The anecdote served as an inspiration to the Rector Major to observe how there are things that change over time because they express the aesthetics of a particular time, and others that must always remain because they are essential.

«Back home, you will have to look at the essential: the art of looking after the people next to us» Fr Artime noted. «Wherever there is a youngster, just being there can give life to our days» he added.

Therefore, «In a world full of increasingly technological challenges» the 10th Successor of Don Bosco warned against the «temptation to be efficient», to look at things and people in a way that is devoid of human warmth. And he explained very clearly: «Our mission is to take care of life wherever it presents itself. And, either we get to the heart of it, or we do something else... What saves us is a heart that seeks to love, serve, because it is filled with God. Everything else is called efficiency».

Interviewed at the end of the experience, all 10 Provincials left their positive com-

ment on the course they had attended: «I thank all those who collaborated in this meeting of Provincials to form us, give us strength, energy and courage in view of our service to the confreres» (Fr Juan Pablo Alcas Michilot, Provincial of Peru - PER).

«I have had a beautiful experience in my Salesian life. You have helped and encouraged me to carry out my service in the Province» (Fr Anthony Boonlert, Provincial of Thailand - THA)

«To animate and govern with the heart of Don Bosco. Being here in Valdocco is always a return to Salesian sources, finding inspiration so one's heart is configured to the heart of Don Bosco and Jesus» (Fr Ademir Ricard Cwendrych, Provincial of Brazil-Porto Alegre - BPA);

«The most beautiful thing we had during this meeting was to share life with Don Bosco present nearby in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, and with Don Bosco alive, who is the Rector Major» (Fr Marcelo Farfán, Provincial of Ecuador - ECU).

«Thank God for Don Bosco, Mary Help of Christians and Mamma Margaret! Thanks to the Rector Major, to his Vicar, to the whole Council: it was the experience of a group where accompaniment was truly perceptible and demonstrated by closeness and availability» (Fr Don Bosco Lourdusamy, Provincial of India-Chennai - INM).
«It was a really good experience with the Rector Major and his Council, breathing the



living presence of Don Bosco. And it was also nice to share experiences with my fellow Provincials. It was a beautiful time!» (Fr Michael Kazembe Mbandama, Superior of the Zambia-Malawi-Zubwe-Namibia - ZMB Vice-Province).

«For me it was a moment of growth in the charism and in the different and broad functions that this service entails» (Fr Julio Andrés Navarro Mora, Provincial of Central America - CAM).

«I had a profound experience of Don Bosco in this place, I experienced communion and felt a great peace here. All this will help me to look after the life of prayer, community, and pastoral care in my Vice-Province» (Fr Anacleto Pires Guterres, Superior of the Timor-Leste Vice-Province - TLS).

«Thank you for this opportunity! It was an experience that has inspired me to serve others with courage and hope» (Fr Bartłomiej Polanski, Provincial of Poland-Wrocław - PLO).

«Two weeks together, sharing the same dream, as well as the difficulties. The Rector Major and his Council helped us recognise our leadership role and responsibilities. Thank you for these beautiful days» (Fr Clive Telles, Provincial of India-Panjim - INP).

On the part of the Provincials, therefore, there was great appreciation for the wealth of experience they have had and the knowledge acquired for the benefit of their mission.

AS THE YEAST IN TODAY'S HUMAN FAMILY

The lay dimension of the Family of Don Bosco

We were born charismatically as a community and as a communion of people of different social backgrounds, states of life, professional profiles... all united by the same mission and motivated by the same charismatic drive that Don Bosco knew how to pass on³³. This is the nature of the Oratory in the years of its foundation, from 1841 to 1859: (18 years!), which still strongly reflects this synergy of the People of God who in various ways cooperate to make young people more at risk "good Christians and upright citizens." It is undeniable that we were immediately born as a group of God's people: it is the nature of our charism and our mission. I am well aware – and I try to pass on this awareness to the whole of our Salesian Family – of a particularly obvious fact: only together, only by living in communion can we do something meaningful today. I launched a strong appeal to the entire Salesian Congregation regarding our shared mission with the laity – an appeal that serves the whole Family of Don Bosco – and not listening to it would lead, in the not too distant future, to a point of dangerous non-return.

I said:

Our GC24 was certainly a charismatic response to Vatican II's ecclesiology of communion. We know well that Don Bosco, from the outset of his mission at Valdocco, involved many lay people, friends and collaborators in such a way that they could be part of his mission among young people. He immediately 'fostered participation and the sharing of responsibility by ecclesiastics and laity, men and women'³⁴. It is therefore, in spite of our resistance, **a point of no return**, because, in addition to corresponding to Don Bosco's actions, the model of the mission shared with the laity proposed by GC24 is in fact 'the only practicable model in present conditions'.³⁵

Thus we have **a point of no return** for the



good of those who decide and have decided to enter into this style of mission, formation, shared life that opens new horizons in the future for the charism of Don Bosco in full harmony with the path that the Church is taking with the guidance of Pope Francis, which is surely prophetic and exemplary. At the same time there is also another dangerous and risky **non-return** for those who instead fail to or do not want to cross this threshold and remain locked into forms of self-referential isolation: no longer in step with the times in the way of living and interpreting the Salesian presence and destined to become irrelevant and to become extinct as the years proceed.

The ultimate goal of Don Bosco's mission is, together with the salvation of his young people, the transformation of society. Don Bosco's broad and courageous vision, his tireless diligence, his resilience in the face of obstacles... are explained only with this horizon of social transformation and evangelisation of young people on a world scale.

Don Bosco does not engage in politics but can talk to all representatives of the various levels of government because his commitment is transparently oriented toward the good of young people. No one who cares about human society and service to others – as public service is and should also be for the good of all – can display a lack of interest in this.

Therefore, our common voice can find access and be given an ear far beyond confessional boundaries if together today we embody the same zeal of predilection for young people that was given to us as a charism and that we can

only achieve *together as a Family of Don Bosco*. **The complementarity of vocations in Don Bosco's Family**, *being united as a Salesian Family, and united with the great number of lay people involved in our presences around the world, together in mission and formation, becomes an unavoidable demand today and even more so in the future*, if we do not want to remain irrelevant.

And communion in the family spirit and within the vast Salesian movement is the great gift we possess as a precious legacy.

6. In the shade of a large tree with beautiful fruit

In my letter at the end of the Second Seminar for the promotion of the Causes of Beatification and Canonisation of the Salesian Family, I wrote:

From Don Bosco down to our own times we recognise a tradition of holiness to which we need to pay attention, since the incarnation of the charism that had its origin in him found its expression in a variety of states of life and in different forms, it is a question of men and women, young people and adults, consecrated persons and lay people, bishops and missionaries who in certain historical, cultural and social contexts, different in time and place, made the special light of the Salesian charism shine out, representing a heritage that continues to play an effective role in the life and in

³³ J.E. VECCHI, *The Salesian Family turns twenty-five*, 140-142.

³⁴ GC24, no. 71.

³⁵ GC28, *Action Programme 6*, p. 59.

the communities of believers and of men and women of good will.³⁶

With humility and a deep sense of gratitude, we recognise in the Salesian Family a great tree with many fruits of holiness. These are men and women, young people and adults who have filled their lives with the leaven of love, a love that is given to the end, faithful to Jesus Christ and to his Gospel.

Ecclesiology shows, as we know, that the different vocations have a common baptismal root and are destined to contribute to the growth of God's people:

In Church Communion the states of life by being ordered one to the other are thus bound together among themselves. They all share in a deeply basic meaning: that of being the manner of living out the commonly shared Christian dignity and the universal call to holiness in the perfection of love. They are different yet complementary, in the sense that each of them has a basic and unmistakable character which sets each apart, while at the same time each of them is seen in relation to the other and placed at each other's service.³⁷

This perspective indicates that the Salesian charism is complete when vocation and mission are lived in the reciprocity and complementarity of the different calls. Precisely this should be the profound meaning of the Salesian Family: a vast apostolic movement for the salvation of young people. It is interesting to note that, among the 173 Saints, Blessed, Venerables, Servants of God of our Family, 25 are lay people who have embodied the Salesian charism in the family, in the Salesian house, in secular life, in their profession, a privileged space of Christian witness, and in different social, historical and cultural contexts. I think it is very appropriate to recall them as testimony within the commentary on this Strenna:

- Saint **Dominic Savio**, a teenager and expression of youthful holiness, fruit of preventive grace and leader of a long line of

young saints.

- Blessed **Laura Vicuna**, a teenager, testifies to the strength of love that gives life and reminds us of the reality of the wounded family.
- Blessed **Ceferino Namuncurá**, a young Mapuche, recalls the value and respect of indigenous cultures and the work of inculturation



of faith and the charism.

- Blessed **Francis Kesy, Czesław Józwiak, Edward Kazmierski, Edward Klinik, Jarogniew Wojciechowski**, martyrs of the oratory at Poznan, witnesses of the faith to the point of martyrdom.
- Among the blessed martyrs of the Spanish persecution we meet: **Alejandro Planas Sauri and Juan de Mata Díez**, lay collaborators; **Tomàs Gil de la Cal, Federico Cobo Sanz, Igino de Mata Díez**, three aspirants to Salesian life; **Bartolomé Blanco Márquez**, layman and engaged to be married; **Teresa Cejudo Redondo**, wife and mother, Salesian Cooperators engaged in the ecclesial, social and associative reality of their environment.
- Blessed **Alexandrina Maria Da Costa**, Salesian Cooperator, who recalls the highest form of cooperation, that of union with the redemptive passion of Jesus.
- Blessed **Albert Marvelli**, a former student of the oratory at Rimini, engaged in the social and political world.
- Venerable **Mamma Margaret Occhiena**, a motherly and female presence at the origins of the charism.
- Venerable **Dorotea Chopitea**, wife and mother, who "welcomed" and gave growth to the Salesian charism, manifesting the choice of a poor life and the ability to be evangelised by the poor.
- Venerable **Attilio Giordani**, husband and father, who embodies Salesian joy in the family, in work, in the oratory, in his mission land.
- Servant of God **Simão**, an Indian Bororo, who

shared the Salesian mission with Father Rodolfo Lunkenbein and recalls the need to recognise and welcome the seeds of truth present in every culture and tradition.

- Servant of God **Matilde Salem**, wife and benefactor, who gave of her goods and life for the fruitfulness of the charism in Syria, and testifies to the strength of communion between Christians, and the capacity for coexistence with the faithful of other religions.
- Servant of God **Antonino Baglieri**, Volunteer With Don Bosco, who in sickness knew how to be the leaven of the Gospel.
- Servant of God **Vera Grita**, Salesian Cooperator and teacher, instrument of a mystical work that commits every Christian to make the grace of the Eucharist bear fruit.
- Servant of God **Akash Bashir**, a young former pupil from Pakistan who gave his life for his brothers and sisters.

Among these numerous and varied figures of holiness I would like to point out ones that offer us a significant and original witness of lay holiness and that, in my opinion, show the multifaceted aspect, that is, rich in aspects, sides, shapes and colours, of lay life lived in different contexts, in different centuries, with different vocations, but full of simple holiness in everyday life. That "next door" secular holiness that will always do us so much good to discover. Let's pause to contemplate them:

▪ Margaret Occhiena, "Mamma"

We know how at the beginning of the oratory, after thinking and rethinking how to get out of difficulties, Don Bosco went to talk about it with his parish priest in Castelnuovo, exposing his need and his fears. "You have your mother!" replied the parish priest without a moment's hesitation, "let her come with you to Turin." Mamma Margaret arrived in Valdocco on 3 November 1846, and for ten years she was the mother of hundreds of boys. In 1846 only the oratory was open, and the boys came there especially on Sundays. The *Biographical Memories* speak of at least 800 who came. Throughout the week, every night, after work in the city, young people came for evening classes. One can just imagine the noise and shouting. The classes took up Don Bosco's kitchen and bedroom, the sacristy, the choir, the chapel. Voices, songs, comings and goings, but it could not be done otherwise. Mamma Margaret was there with them. Certainly priests and even lay

³⁶ A. FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME, *Letter of the Rector Major at the conclusion of the 2nd Seminar for the promotion of the Causes of Beatification and Canonisation of the Salesian Family*, Rome 20 May 2018.

< https://archive.sdb.org/Documenti/Santita/Seminario_2018/Santi_2_Seminario_2018_RMlettera_en.pdf#.

³⁷ *ChL*, 55.

people came to help Don Bosco and some women came later to help. But only Mamma Margaret was there, full time, always. This availability made her dear to everyone, and she was therefore venerated by those who knew her. Right from the outset, when she came to Turin, as soon as she became known by people in surrounding suburbs, she was called by no other name than "Mamma".

Here, for ten years, her life fused with her son's life and with the beginnings of the Salesian work: she was Don Bosco's first and main Cooperator; her active kindness was the maternal element of the preventive system. Illiterate – but full of that wisdom that comes from above – she was also a help to many poor street children, children of no one; she put God in first place, consuming herself for him in a life of poverty, prayer and sacrifice.

▪ Bartolomé Blanco Márquez, a young all-round Christian

"I am a worker, I was born of parents who were also workers. I have lived and do live in a narrow setting, one where the lowly class work. Running in my veins, sometimes exacerbated by the fire of youthful enthusiasm, I sense a protest, an energetic protest against those who believe that we are not like them because we have had the misfortune – or perhaps the fate – of being born into poverty, wearing worker's gear and having rough and calloused hands. But let us clarify our ideas: I am a worker and I am a Catholic." The person speaking this way is a young man of 19, by profession a chair manufacturer, a chairmaker, at the People's Action rally on 5 November 1933 in Pozoblanco (Spain); an upright and courageous young man with uncommon intelligence, of humble origins, a worker, defender of the rights of the people and of the Church.

Born in Pozoblanco (Cordoba, Spain) on 25 December 1914, he lost his mother in the so-called "Spanish" flu epidemic. Having lost his father at the age of twelve, he had to leave school and start working as a chair maker. When the Salesians arrived in Pozoblanco in September 1930, Bartolomé attended the oratory and helped as a catechist and leader. He found in Fr Antonio do Muiño a director who urged him to continue his intellectual, cultural

and spiritual formation by being involved in study groups. Until Bartolomé's untimely death, this Salesian would be his confessor and spiritual guide. Bartolomé was appreciated by relatives, friends, companions for his ingenuity, apostolic commitment, and his attitude as a leader. Later he entered Catholic Action, of which he was secretary and where he gave of his best. He moved to Madrid to specialise in the apostolate among the workers at the Istituto Sociale Operaio or Social Workers Institute, and distinguished himself as an eloquent speaker and scholar of social issues. Having obtained a scholarship, he learned about Catholic workers' organisations in France, Belgium and the Netherlands through a trip organised by the Social Workers' Institute. Appointed delegate of Catholic trade unions in the province of Cordoba he founded eight groups. When the revolution broke out on 30 June 1936, Bartolomé returned to Pozoblanco and made himself available to the "Civil Guard" for the defence of the city, which surrendered to the other warring faction after a month. Accused of rebellion, he was sent to prison, where he continued to behave in exemplary manner: "to deserve martyrdom, one must offer oneself to God as a martyr!" He was tried and sentenced to death in Jaén on 29 September. After the sentence, while remaining calm and defending himself with dignity, he said: "You believed that you were hurting me while instead you are doing me good because you have chiselled out a crown for me." The letters he wrote to his family and fiancée on the eve of his death are clear proof of this: "Let this be my last will: forgiveness, forgiveness and forgiveness; but indulgence, which I want to be accompanied by doing everything possible. So I ask you to avenge me with the revenge of the Christian: reciprocating those who have tried to hurt me with good", he wrote to his aunts and cousins.

And to his fiancée, Maruja: "When I have a few hours left for my final rest, I just want to ask you one thing: that in memory of the love we had for each other which grows at this moment, you take care of the salvation of your soul as the main objective, so that we can meet in heaven for all eternity where no one will separate us." His fellow prisoners kept the moving details of his departure for death: barefoot, to resemble Christ more closely. When they put the cuffs on his wrists, he kis-

sed the hands of the militia member who put them on him. He did not accept, as they proposed, to be shot in the back. "Those who die for Christ," he said, "must do so facing forward and with bared chest." Long live Christ the King!" and he fell with open arms in the shape of a cross, riddled with bullets next to an oak tree. It was 2 October 1936. He was not yet 22. He was beatified in Rome on 28 October 2007.

▪ Attilio Giordani, a layman "in Don Bosco"

Born in Milan on 3 February 1913, he distinguished himself since his early years for his great passion for the Salesian Oratory of Saint Augustine and, already at the age of eighteen, for his dedication to the young people who went there. For decades he was a diligent catechist and a constant and brilliant leader, with so much simplicity and joy. He looked after the liturgy, formation, games free time, theatre. He loved God with all his heart and found the resources for the life of grace in sacramental life, prayer and spiritual direction. During his military service, which began in 1934 and ended, in stages, in 1945, he demonstrated an apostolic approach among his comrades in arms. He was employed with the Pirelli Firm in Milan where he also spread joy and good humour, and a profound sense of duty. On 6 May 1944, he married a catechist, Noemi D'Avanzo. They would have three children: Piergiorgio, Mariagrazia, Paola. In his family he was a husband and father, rich in great faith and serenity, chosen austerity and evangelical poverty for the benefit of the most needy. Without taking anything away from the family, he made the oratory his second family, putting his wealth of inventiveness and extraordinary educational skill at the youngsters' service. In agreement with his wife Noemi, he left for Mato Grosso (Brazil) to share his own children's choice of missionary commitment. On 18 December 1972, during a meeting, after speaking enthusiastically and ardently of the duty to lay down one's life for others, he suddenly felt himself failing. He was just in time to tell his son, "Pier, you carry on" and then died of a heart attack. He has been Venerable since 9 October 2013.

His life as an apostolically committed Christian took on such a determined and personal orientation to discover (these are all his words):

"The joy of serving Christ"; "not being good just for those who are good"; "Living in the world without being of the world"; "Go against the current"; "Not seeking but giving"; "It is necessary to live what you want to make live." This was something that matured over the different stages of his life: as a teenager, as a young soldier then as a soldier on the Greek-Albanian military front, as shown in his "War Diary". The choice of his fiancée Noemi Davanzo was also motivated by reasons of faith, as she wrote in a letter: "When the Lord brought you to me, he placed before me your love and spirit of dedication to those who are especially beloved of the Saviour. This was the main trigger that prompted me to ask you to be my companion."

Attilio's faith was so great that it is truly a "sign" of God's presence: in the family, in the oratory, in the parish community and for those who meet him: a faith that is more than proclaimed – it shines through his actions and his way of being: "The extent of our belief is manifested in our being."

▪ Vera Grita "The little teacher from Savona"

Born in Rome on 28 January 1923, she lived and studied in Savona where she obtained her teacher's certificate. At the age of 21, during a sudden air raid on the city (1944), she was overwhelmed and trampled underfoot by the fleeing crowd, with serious consequences for her physically, and from then on she remained forever marked by suffering. She went unnoticed in her short earthly life, teaching in the schools of the Ligurian hinterland, where she earned the esteem and affection of everyone for her kind and meek character. She attended Mass in Savona at the Salesian parish of Mary Help of Christians, and was regular in her use of the Sacrament of Penance. A Salesian Cooperator since 1967, she carried out her call in the total gift of herself to the Lord, who in an extraordinary way gave himself to her in the depths of her heart with the "Voice", the "Word" with which he communicated the Work of the Living Tabernacles to her. Under the impulse of divine grace and accepting the mediation of her spiritual guides, Vera Grita responded to the gift of God by witnessing in her life, marked by the constant fatigue of il-

ness, to the encounter with the Risen One and dedicating herself with heroic generosity to the teaching and education of her students, attending to the needs of her family and witnessing to a life of evangelical poverty. She died on 22 December 1969, at the age of 46, in a room the hospital in Pietra Ligure.

Vera Grita attests first of all to an all-embracing Eucharistic orientation, which became explicit especially in her final years of life. She did not think in terms of programmes, apostolic initiatives, projects: she accepted the fundamental "project" that is Jesus himself, until he made her life his own. Today's world attests to a great need for the Eucharist.

Her journey through the strenuous labour of her days also offers a new lay perspective on holiness: becoming an example of conversion, acceptance and sanctification for the "poor", the "frail" and the "sick" who can recognise themselves and find hope in her.

As Salesian Cooperator, Vera Grita lived and worked, taught and encountered people with her strong Salesian sensitivity: from the loving-kindness of her discreet but effective presence, to her ability to be loved by children and families; from the pedagogy of kindness that she carried out with her constant smile, to her generous readiness with which, regardless of the inconvenience, she turned in preference to the least, to the little ones, to the distant, the forgotten; from her generous passion for God and His Glory to the way of the cross, letting everything be taken from her in her illness.

▪ Akash Bashir, witness to fortitude and peace

A Past Pupil of Don Bosco, he is the first Pakistani whose Cause of Beatification and Canonisation is in process. On 15 March 2015, he sacrificed himself to prevent a suicide bomber from causing a massacre in St John's Church in Youhannabad, a Christian neighbourhood in Lahore, Pakistan. Akash Bashir was 20 years old, had studied at the Don Bosco Technical Institute in Lahore and had become a security volunteer.

What is most striking is how this simple young man was so strong in dealing with evil and fighting murderous violence. The words he said to the bomber before he died – "I will die, but I will not let you enter the church" – express

strong faith and heroic courage in witnessing to love without measure. The Gospel of that Fourth Sunday of Lent (15 March 2015) proclaimed Jesus' words to Nicodemus: "For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God" (*Jn* 3:20-21). Akash sealed these words with his young Christian blood. He fought cheek by jowl with the power of death, hatred and violence and made light and truth triumph. He washed his white garment with the blood of the Lamb, making it resplendent (cf. *Rev* 7:14).

Contact with the world and the Salesian charism reinforced the goodness and generosity in Akash that he had learned in his family and in the Christian community. Akash Bashir is an example of holiness for every Christian, an example for all the young Christians of the world. And he is undoubtedly a clear charismatic sign of the Salesian educational system. Akash is the voice of so many brave young people who manage to give their lives for faith despite difficulties, poverty, religious extremism, indifference, social inequality, discrimination. The life and martyrdom of this young Pakistani makes us recognise the power of the Holy Spirit of God, alive, found in the least expected places – in the humble, the persecuted, the young; in the little ones of God.

▪ And let us not forget Artemides Zatti in the year of his canonisation

He was certainly a consecrated religious, *but one cannot fail to be struck by the lay dimension of his holiness* spent in the daily exercise of charity in the simplicity of a small hospital and a small village. He is an example and a model of consecration to his people in sacrificial and patient work, having God as its source, its motivation for faith and as the sole and ultimate goal of his life. Their lives, the lives of all of them and their example are like "leaven in the dough" that continues to grow, and the Kingdom within us and around us.

*The lay faithful offer the humus for the growth of the faith*³⁸. This expression of Be-

³⁸ BENEDICT XVI, *Catechesis* 7 February 2007.

nedict XVI reminds us that Christianity is rooted and develops in the world thanks to the faith and commitment to evangelisation of so many lay people, married people, families and Christian communities. By the grace of Baptism, faith grows and spreads.

Similarly, the above-mentioned lay witnesses of Salesian holiness and many others “*next door*” have also given and continue to offer *the humus for the growth of the Salesian charism*.

This company of saints reminds us that before works and roles, the quality of human relationships is the privileged place for the proclamation of the Gospel and the flourishing of the charism.

These testimonies remind us of the universal call to holiness, so dear both to St Francis de Sales – as we have already said – and to our Father of the Salesian Family, Don Bosco, when he proposed the goal of holiness to the young people of the oratory and to ordinary folk as a goal open to all, easy to follow and oriented to endless happiness.

All this by having Mary Help of Christians, the one who welcomed Jesus into her virginal womb and for this reason Mother, Teacher and Guide of the faith, especially in the accompaniment of the young generations on their journey towards holiness.

The lives of all of them and their example are like “yeast for the bread.”

7. Our young people as YEAST in today's world

I would like to conclude this year's Strenna message with a final word that addresses our young people and the path we want to take together, because they too want to accompany us as we want to accompany them:

We want to tell you loudly, with all our heart. Being here for us was a dream come true: in this special place that is Valdocco, where the Salesian mission began, together with Salesians and young people for the Salesian mission, with our common will to be saints together. You have our hearts in your hands.

Take care of this precious treasure of yours. Please never forget us and keep listening to us. Turin, 7 March 2020.³⁹
In fact, young people prepare for life, we accompany them on this journey, and I have no doubt that a very great service that we would render to them, to society and to the Church is to help them become aware of the social role they must play and for which they must prepare. That is why they are also the first to learn that they are called to be *yeast in in the human family*.

In preparing to write this commentary, I decided to look for and read, precisely for this final section of the Strenna, some of what the last three pontiffs – St John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis – have told the young people, because I was sure that their messages would be abundant and very powerful. And that is how they seem to me: so current, so timely and, dare I say it, so “Salesian”. And at the same time I want to strongly affirm how vast, extensive and demanding is the task that young people have before them in the Church and in the world. If they accept the challenge of being truly today's young people, active in their Christian and social commitment and true “yeast” in the human family.

Pope John Paul II, three years before his death, in one of his speeches proposed⁴⁰ eight great challenges that are genuine proposals of Christian, social and political life and commitment for young people who want to meet significant challenges. In reality, these are eight challenges that some scholars reduce to just one that could be expressed in this way: *putting the human being at the centre of economics and politics*.

The task is this: the defence of human life in all situations; the promotion of the family and the eradication of poverty (through debt reduction, promoting development and opening up fair international trade); the defence of human rights and work to ensure disarmament (reduction of arms sales and consolidation of peace after conflicts); the fight against major diseases and access for all to the most ne-

cessary medicines; the protection of nature and prevention of natural disasters; and finally, the strict application of international law and conventions.

In turn, in the Encyclical Letter on integral human development, *Caritas in Veritate*⁴¹, **Pope Benedict XVI** lists the current challenges that are urgent and essential for the life of the world and in which today's young people can engage, such as: the use of the earth's resources, respect for ecology, the just distribution of goods and the control of financial mechanisms, the fight against hunger in the world, promotion of the dignity of work, human solidarity with the poorest countries, service to the culture of life, inter-religious dialogue and the construction of peace among peoples and nations.

Finally, **Pope Francis** proposes a series of demanding tasks that we have as Christians and that await young people who want to take them on and engage in them with their faith and commitment, since many other young people suffer from such violence and extortion. Among his various writings (Encyclicals, Apostolic Exhortations and Messages to young people),⁴² I would like to recall the following: there are terrible and painful contexts of war (and I cannot fail to mention the unjust war against the Ukrainian people, which we all know because it has lasted for eleven months now); there are many people and young people who suffer from violence that manifests itself in many different ways: kidnappings, extortion, organised crime, trafficking of human beings, slavery and sexual exploitation, war crimes, etc.

Some children are forced to become soldiers, to be part of armed gangs and criminals, to be involved in drug trafficking. Not a few children and teenagers are enslaved in the sex trade and trafficking. And there is no shortage of people and young people who are marginalised and even martyred because of their ethnicity or their beliefs. The pain of migration (in inhuman situations) and the scourge of xenophobia cannot be forgotten.⁴³ The discarding of people around the world, racism and the viola-

³⁹ GC28, *What kind of Salesians for the Youth of Today?* Letter of the young people to Chapter members, Annex 3, p. 146.

⁴⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Address to Ambassadors of Countries Accredited to the Holy See*, Rome, 10 January 2002.

⁴¹ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate*, Rome, 29 June 2009.

⁴² Cf. *ChV*, 72-74; Cf. *FT*, 25.

⁴³ *FT*, 38-40.

tion of universal human rights are other realities of a world in which there is also so much pain.⁴⁴

Are we aware that all this and much more affects this human family in which we seek to be yeast, salt and light⁴⁵? Could we say that this is a pessimistic view? No, not at all. Pope Francis himself cites many advances that exist today, but that go hand in hand with a "deterioration of ethics":

With the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, we do not ignore the positive advances made in the areas of science, technology, medicine, industry and welfare, above all in developed countries. Nonetheless, "we wish to emphasise that, together with these historical advances, great and valued as they are, there exists a moral deterioration that influences international action and a weakening of spiritual values and responsibility, his contributes to a general feeling of frustration, isolation and desperation [...]. We see "outbreaks of tension and a build-up of arms and ammunition in a global context dominated by uncertainty, disillusionment, fear of the future, and controlled by narrow economic interests". We can also point to "major political crises, situations of injustice and the lack of an equitable distribution of natural resources... [...]. In the face of such crises that result in the deaths of millions of children – emaciated from poverty and hunger – there is an unacceptable silence on the international level.⁴⁶

This reality is an opportunity for all of us, but especially for young people, to feel the Lord's call to live their Christian and also Salesian life

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 18-24.

⁴⁵ I would like to emphasise in a very significant way what the Rector Major Fr Pascual Chávez wrote about the commitment of the Salesian Family to the defence of life, in all its senses and in all its dimensions. This is a very rich list of our current commitments (which also involves young people): Cf. CHÁVEZ, P., *You love everything that exists, and nothing that you have made disgusts you... Lord Lover of Life. (Wis 11:24.12.1), in 10. Circular Letters to the Salesians (ACG 396 (2006) Letter 019)*, LAS, Rome 2021, 604-605, 609-617.

⁴⁶ *FF*, 29 which also cites the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, Abu Dhabi (4 February 2019); *L'Osservatore Romano* 4-5 February 2019, p.6.

(within the family of Don Bosco) as a great task.

This task and challenge had already been recalled by Pope Paul VI at the end of the Second Vatican Council with a message addressed to young people in which he said:

Lastly, it is to you, young men and women of the world, that the council wishes to address its final message. For it is you who are to receive the torch from the hands of your elders and to live in the world at the period of the most gigantic transformations ever realized in its history. It is you who, receiving the best of the example of the teaching of your parents and your teachers, are to form the society of tomorrow. You will either save yourselves or you will perish with it.

[...] ...and build in enthusiasm a better world than your elders had!⁴⁷

Today, with deep conviction, I address this request that comes to all of us to be truly yeast in the human family to all of you, dear young people. These challenges demand that you say yes or no to your commitment to building a more just and fraternal world with your life, your formation, your studies, your work and your vocation. These challenges place you at the crossroads of accepting or rejecting a challenging and exciting life in which to put all your strength and energies according to God's dream for each of you.

And certainly you are not asked for any particular, extraordinary heroism, but only – yet this is already a lot – to make your own gifts and God-given to each of you fruitful, committing yourselves to grow in faith, in true Love, in fraternity and in service to all, especially to the least, to those who are most affected by life, to those who have least opportunity.

It seems to me to be a precious proposal for every young Christian and Salesian who wants to be a missionary disciple of the Lord today, and also a challenge and a proposal of such dignity and scope that, without any shame, it can be offered to any young person who wants to live their human condition to the full, whether

⁴⁷ PAUL VI, *Message to Youth, Rome*, 8 December 1965.

they are Christians or professes other religious beliefs or seek to an essential and authentic humanism. At the same time it leads you to live outside your "comfort zones" which, like sirens with their songs, can lull you to sleep. I just referred to humanism and I would like to conclude explicitly with a reference to this "Salesian humanism" with which we can educate all the young people of all nations of the world who are involved in Salesian presences because

For Don Bosco [it] meant giving due weight to all that is positive in the life of individuals, in creation, in the events of history. This led him to accept the genuine values present in the world, especially if pleasing to the young; to place himself in the flow of culture and of human development in his own times, encouraging the good and refusing to lament about the evil; wisely seeking the cooperation of many people, convinced that each one has gifts that need to be discovered, recognised and put to good use; believing in the power of education which provides support for the young person's development, and encouraging him to become an upright citizen and a good Christian; and always and everywhere entrusting himself to the providence of God, perceived and loved as a Father.⁴⁸

I conclude by thanking the Lord for a beautiful and full life in our Salesian Family at the service of the Gospel, asking the Lord for the whole Church and for us as part of the same Church to accept the joyful task of evangelising, because "she was sent by Christ to reveal and to communicate the love of God to all men and nations."⁴⁹

May our Mother Help of Christians help all of us to be missionary disciples, little stars that reflect her light. And let us pray that hearts may open to joyfully receive the proclamation of salvation which is God himself in Jesus.

Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, S.D.B.
Rector Major

⁴⁸ Fr. CHÁVEZ, *Like Don Bosco the educator we offer young people the Gospel of joy through a pedagogy of kindness. Strenna 2013 (ACG 415 (2013) Letter 038, op.cit., 1240-1241.*



Office of the President
World Confederation of Past Pupils of Don Bosco
Via Marsala, 42, 00185 Roma, Italia
president@exallievi.org +35699296552

24 June 2023
Feast of St John the Baptist

Invitation to the Extraordinary General World Assembly of the World Confederation of Past Pupils of Don Bosco

Dear Past Pupils of Don Bosco,

The Presidency of the World Confederation of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco is cordially inviting you to join us for an Extraordinary General World Assembly that marks a significant moment for our organisation. Due to unforeseen circumstances of Covid-19, we were unable to celebrate the momentous 150th Anniversary in 2020 and hold the regular General World Assembly in person in 2021. However, we now have an exciting opportunity to come together in this Extraordinary General World Assembly and shape the future of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco and reflect on our past.

The Presidency of World Confederation of Past Pupils of Don Bosco has unanimously decided to convoke Extraordinary Assembly in its meeting on 11 – 12th May 2023 in Vietnam. Here are three compelling reasons why we encourage your attendance:

Strategic Plan Alignment: The Extraordinary General World Assembly is a direct response to our strategic plan, which outlines our vision for the future of Past Pupils of Don Bosco. By joining, you will have a unique chance to contribute your ideas and insights, helping to shape the path forward and ensure continuity in our organisation.

Uncelebrated 150th Anniversary: The unfortunate circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic prevented us from coming together to commemorate our 150-year history of achievements. This World Assembly presents a special occasion for us to honour our rich heritage, pay tribute to the past, and set the stage for an even brighter future. Apart from marking the missed opportunity of our 150th Anniversary, this year the Salesian Family will be commemorating the 200 years from the dream of Don Bosco that started his life project.

Journeying Together - Change for Continuity: Our chosen theme highlights the core values and principles that have guided Don Bosco in establishing the Salesian spirituality and the mission with the young. By participating in this assembly, you will engage in meaningful reflection and discernment about the evolvement of the Past Pupils Together, we will be able to amend our Statute to reflect better on the needs and challenges of 21st century.

The Extraordinary General Assembly will take place in our place of origin, Torino - Valdocco, from October 3 to 6, 2024. We eagerly await your presence, as your unique perspective and experience will undoubtedly enrich our discussions and decisions.

Let us come together as a community, united by our shared gratitude and love for Don Bosco. We look forward to welcoming you with open arms and forging a future of excellence together.

In Don Bosco

Bryan Magro
President

Peter Kovac
Secretary General

Fr. Joan Lluís Playa SDB
Rector Delegate
for Salesian Family

Bro Dominic Nam SDB
World SDB Delegate
for Past Pupils

Italy



European Regional meeting of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco

(ANS – Turin) – 27 June 2023

The regional European meeting of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco was held at the Salesian Mother House at Valdocco, Turin from 22 to 25 June 2023, in the presence of the World President of the Past Pupils Confederation, Bryan Magro.

The meeting was organised by the Regional Councillor for Europe and the Middle East, Valerio Martorana, and Alessandro Pensabene, responsible for Young Past Pupils (GEx), also involving Fr Joan Lluís Playà, Central Delegate of the Rector Major for the Salesian Family Secretariat, and Fr Roman Jachimowicz, General Councillor for North and Central Europe.

President Magro made official the dates for convening the Extraordinary World Assembly to be held in Turin from 3 to 6 October 2024 on the theme: *“Let’s Walk Together: Change to Continue”*; all national Federations will have time to discuss and present amendments to modify the statutes of the Confederation; discussion has already begun at the European level and it will be necessary to understand what to change and what to continue in order to maintain the activities that each Federation carries out.

During the three-day discussion, the European Past Pupils leaders discussed topics such as ecology, migration and the management of European funds to enable the attraction and mobility of young people; raising the age of the young Past Pupils from the current 30 to 35 years, so as to



ensure such a presence in the decision-making bodies of the Federations; enhancing and increasing the involvement of Past Pupils in the Salesian Family’s Spirituality Days which will be held in Turin from 18 to 21 January 2024.

The Salesians of Don Bosco World Delegate for the Past Pupils, Bro. Dominic Duc Nam Nguyen, SDB, urged participants to develop their presence in the areas in which they operate, through spirituality, mission and solidarity that must lead at every level to a synodal journey, starting from the Strenna of the Rector Major.

The representatives of the Federations presented their reports in a fraternal and friendly atmosphere, and shared their hopes and challenges for the future, reinforcing their commitment to helping the movement grow in the region and increasing the involvement of young people.

«This regional meeting has shown that the Past Pupils and friends of Don Bosco are vibrant» the World President Bryan Magro said. *«We have very strong organisations*

in this region that are active and trying to achieve the goals of our association. It is clear that we have great potential and can continue to grow. I know that in the future we will strengthen our presence in many countries and provinces».

The world presidency was there with Bryan Magro, President; Dominic Duc Nam Nguyen, World Delegate; Valerio Martorana, Regional Councillor for Europe and the Middle East; Peter Kovac, Secretary General; Celso Nogueira, Treasurer; Alessandro Pensabene, GEx Head of Europe and the Middle East.

With regard to the European delegations represented, the following should be noted for their presence: Giovanni Costanza, President, Fr Antonio D’Angelo, SDB Delegate, and Silvia Simonato, responsible for GEX in Italy; Fr Eric Haelvoet, SDB Delegate for Belgium North; Vedrana Civijn and Kajinic Mayija, for Croatia; Bernard D’Neil, for England; Marton Csany, President, and Hanna Lili Adorjan, responsible for GEX in Hungary; Stefan Farrugia, Vice President, Fr Jake Mamo, Delegate, and Valerie Vella, responsible for GEX in Malta; Krzysztof Giaranek, Coordinator, and Bartosz Fedorowicz for Poland; Robert Mruk, President, Fr Pavol Grach, SDB Delegate, and Janna Synak responsible for GEX in Slovakia; Diego Aragon, President, and Fr Eusebio Martínez, Delegate for Spain; Fr Oleh Ladnyu, Delegate, and Mykhailo Dziubii for Ukraine.

The logistics of the meeting were taken care of by Piergiorgio Previotto, Alumni Coordinator of Piedmont, and Giovanni Costanza, President of the Italian Federation.



Italy

Online meeting of young past pupils to discuss their future in Europe

(ANS - Rome) - 28 July 2023

The digital meeting of the Vice-Presidents of the Young Past Pupils (GEX) from Europe and the Middle East took place last Wednesday, 26 July 2023, organized by the GEX Councillor for Europe and the Middle East, Alessandro Pensabene, in continuity with what was done at the Turin meeting the previous month.

Pensabene said on the occasion: «I am very happy with the establishment of this GEX group and the work that is being done. I see a lot of enthusiasm, commitment and desire to work together, and this is just the beginning». The meeting was attended by young past pupils from Malta, Spain, Hungary, Slovakia, Italy, Poland and Ukraine. During the meeting, each leader presented the organisation in their country, the young past pupils who are part of it and the activities carried out over the last period.

In the second part of the meeting, Bryan Magro, President of the World Confederation of Past Pupils of Don Bosco, was guest speaker and spoke about the mission of the Past Pupils and provided multiple points for reflection to the participants.

Magro said: «*Change can be achieved by having more active GEX in our organisation... If we want to survive we need GEX! And if we are truly Salesians and belong to Don Bosco, young people must be the key players in our organisation!*». Finally, in the last part of the meeting, the next activities to be carried out in 2024 were discussed, first of all the "Leader School", where the new leaders can be formed.

The next online meeting is scheduled for 31 August at 8:00 pm (UTC+2), and any young past pupil who wants to participate can request access by writing to

councilor.europe.gex@exallievi.org



India

Review meeting of "Youth Involve" inspires youth dreams and social entrepreneurship

Jorhat, India - 15 September 2023

The quarterly review meeting of "Youth Involve" was held in the idyllic setting of the Bosco Institute - Lifeplus in Jorhat on 3 and 4 September. This is an initiative aimed at realising the dreams of young people.

It is an **idea that came from a past pupil of the Bosco Institute** who had the desire to save other young women from the situations of pain that she herself had experienced throughout her life. Thus, over the years, "Youth Involve" has fulfilled the dreams of 31 young people who now together form a community of young social entrepreneurs.

During the review meetings, participants celebrate their journey and achievements, identify their challenges and devise measures to alleviate them, and reinforce themselves with the skills needed to carry out their initiatives.

The meeting on 3 and 4 September was also an opportunity to pray together for the people of the State of Manipur.



Africa

The first regional meeting for Africa of the Young Past Pupils of Don Bosco (GEX)

(ANS) – 26 September 2023

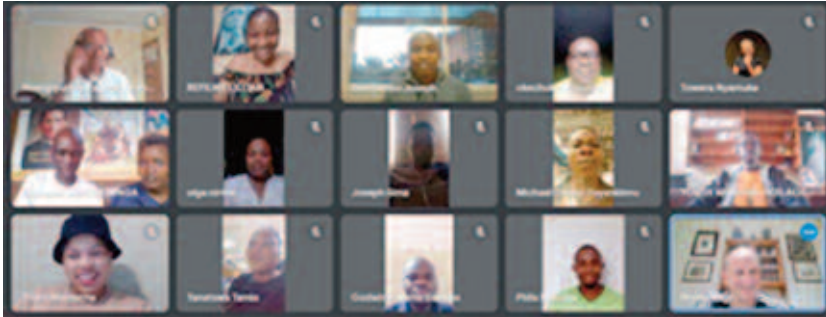
The first regional meeting for Africa of the Young Past Pupils (GEX) of the World Confederation of Past Pupils took place online on Saturday 23 September, involving GEX representatives from eleven countries: Uganda, Burundi, Madagascar, South Africa, eSwatini, Lesotho, Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Malawi.

The meeting was organised and chaired by the GEX Regional for Africa and Madagascar, Joseph Ssemembo, who at the opening of the meeting stressed the advantages of becoming a member of the World Confederation and the importance of forming communication channels to stay in touch.

When opening the meeting, Mr. Joseph Ssemambo highlighted the advantages of becoming members to the World Confederation and the formation of communication channels to stay connected, we need to form communication channels that keep us in touch and an update on what we are doing.

Mr. Ssemambo stated *«It is important that we carry out activities that give the young an opportunity to actively participate in our organisation»*.

Each representative then had the opportunity to speak during the meeting and to il-



lustrate the activities carried out in their respective countries.

The meeting also involved Bryan Magro, President of the World Confederation of Past Pupils, who highlighted the importance of this moment. *«Today's meeting is a historic moment for the World Confederation of Past Pupils of Don Bosco as the first online GEX meeting for Africa has taken place.*

We cannot have a World Confederation without Africa. Africa is one of the four regions of the World Confederation, and the active participation of all African countries where we have the presence of the Salesian Family is crucial.

Strengthening the presence GEX in all levels of governance is one of the priorities of the Strategic Plan and during the last year, we have worked to establish our organisation in various African countries and today's meeting is a sign of the commitment in involving young people to actively participate in our organisation».

Balthazar Maniratunga, Regional Councilor for Africa of the Confederation of Past Pupils, also spoke at the meeting, providing details on "Afrabosco", the regional meeting of Past Pupils to be held in Madagascar next December.

Finally, the young people stressed the need for leadership training, which provides GEX representatives with the necessary skills to become better leaders.



Hong Kong

Heavy damage to Salesian work due to the intense rainfall in recent days

(ANS – Hong Kong) – 28 September 2023

In recent weeks, Hong Kong has been paralyzed by a flash flood. Subway stations were submerged by water mixed with mud and motorists were trapped on the roads. The eastern side of Hong Kong Island, where the House of Salesian Studies (Shau Kei Wan) is located, was badly hit.

The Salesian Studentate was also seriously damaged by the abundant rains that fell on the city on the night of 7 September and the mud that formed immediately after. The affected area includes the Youth Ministry Office, the Social Communication Office, the Chinese section of the seminary library and the new wing, which houses our Lady's House. A third of the books were lost, while the elevator and the recreation room were filled with muddy debris. In offices, rain caused considerable damage, especially to computers and servers. In one night, the electronic data and paper copies of the documents were wiped out.

Three days after the violent weather phenomenon, when the weather stabilised, the cleaning work began. Salesian Youth Movement leaders and the young Salesians in formation have come to remove broken furniture, shovel the mud and drain the sewers. Out of love and belonging to this place where they prayed and spent numerous moments of joy, the young people worked from morning to night, often with their bare hands, demonstrating how this is really their second home.

The most serious damage was recorded in the library. Here, for anyone who loves books, the situation can be described as heartbreaking. Even just to enter, in fact, it

was necessary to step on books and manuals. Past Pupils, volunteers, but also many young people and children were organised to clean up the entire area, also helped by a group of volunteers from the Government Department of Educational

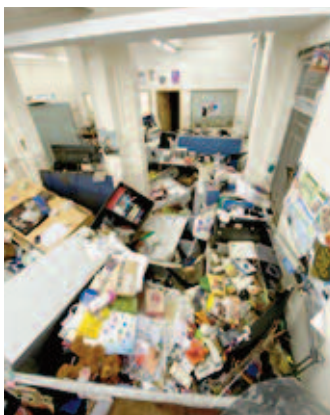
Services.

«*The cleaning took two weeks of work to complete*», write the Salesians in Hong Kong in a statement.

«*It was moving to see how everyone, especially our Salesian Youth Movement leaders, were involved. It is also appropriate to express here our heartfelt gratitude for the generous assistance of the past pupils, parishioners and members of the Salesian Family. All of them have expressed the family spirit in concrete actions*».

An intensive clean-up will now take place in the affected area and the offices will be moved to temporary premises.

The activity room, the retreat centre and the Province website are temporarily suspended and, for the time being, all news and updates will be published on the "Salesian Family" Facebook page and via Whatsapp. In the meantime, the Salesians continue to assure their prayers for the prompt recovery of the damaged buildings, especially for the Youth Ministry Office and the Seminary library, so that we can soon return to normality and begin to serve the good of young people and the entire Salesian Congregation.



Portugal



Meeting of Past Pupils and celebration of the 60 years of the Mary Help of Christians Shrine at Mogofores

Mogofores, Portugal – 13 July 2023

As part of the 60th anniversary of the National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians, the national meeting of Past Pupils of Don Bosco was held on 1 July at the Salesian House in Mogofores.

After the initial greetings and welcome by the outgoing Rector, Fr José Fernandes, the National Delegate for the Salesian Family, Fr Joaquim Taveira, offered a brief message of reflection, and Celso Nogueira, President of the Portuguese Federation of Past Pupils of Don Bosco presented the Strategic Plan of the World Confederation for the period 2021-2027.

After this formative and informative moment, there was a return to the past, re-



calling the memories of those who have passed through this Salesian work, many of whom had an impact on the construction and consecration of the shrine.

After some testimonies by the Past Pupils present, the central moment of the meeting came, the Eucharist, celebrated by the National Delegate for the Salesian Family, during which almost 2,000 euro were collected for the restoration of the roof of the shrine.

Finally, a small book fair was organised, with an exhibition of various titles published by the respective authors present, some of whom donated the proceeds to the campaign for the restoration of the Shrine roof.





Ecuador



THE "SALESIAN FOUNDATION PROJECT GUAYAQUIL" celebrated 30 years of work for children and young people in vulnerable situations

(ANS - Guayaquil) - 17 August 2023

On the day of the commemoration of the 208th anniversary of the birth of Don Bosco, the "Salesian Foundation Project Guayaquil" celebrated its 30 years of work in favour of children and adolescents at risk and vulnerable, especially those in street situations and their families, through an educational pastoral proposal based on Don Bosco's pedagogy.

The Foundation's work began in 1993 with the opening of the "Fr Antonio Amador" home for street children in the city centre of Guayaquil.

The aim was to create a preventive structure that would welcome young people



from the most vulnerable neighbourhoods. The programme of the celebration took place in the facilities of the Don Bosco House. Initially, the Eucharist was celebrated and presided over by Fr. Juan Flores, the provincial accompanied by the Salesians who were part of the community.

This was followed by a solemn ceremony attended by various local authorities, representatives of partner organizations, lay collaborators and the mission beneficiaries.

Mauricio Bonifaz, Coordinator of the "Kinder Not Hilfe-KNH" organisation, was also among those who spoke. He said: *«It is an honour to feel that we are partners in this great work of human edification; we have a*





deep satisfaction in continuing to make progress with the Foundation.

I would like to recall a phrase from Don Bosco: "on the healthy education of the young depends the happiness of nations", and there is a need for this vision of solidarity, carried out every day by the Salesians».

Afterwards, Tomás Ordoñez, former student and current collaborator of the "Salesian Project Foundation Guayaquil", took the floor, thanking the institution for training him to be a good person.

«Looking back in time, it is impossible not to feel feelings of nostalgia and pride for all the experiences we have had. As we move forward, going our different ways, we



carry with us the miracle of Don Bosco. We are ambassadors of the values learnt here: compassion, perseverance and love».

«Dear young people, follow the example of the good Salesians: work, prayer, temperance and dedication» urged Fr Flores. «On behalf of the Salesian Province, we remain committed to this work, because where there are young people, there is the love of our father Don Bosco».

Finally, a small tribute was paid to the outgoing director, Fr Esteban Ortiz.

Through an emotional video, the recipients of the Project delivered their greetings and messages of thanks for his accompaniment and closeness as a true father.



Brazil



The Santa Rosa school at Niterói celebrates 140 years with the opening of the Salesian Games



Niterói, Brazil - 20 July 2023

The opening ceremony of the 2023 Salesian Games was held at the Don Bosco multi-sports gymnasium at the [Santa Rosa school](#) on 10 July.

This year the event had an even more special value as it celebrated the school's 140 years of life, the first to be founded when Don Bosco's Salesians arrived in Brazil. In Salesian Pedagogy, sporting activity has always been seen as a means of moral formation and transformation in the lives of young people.

Don Bosco, used to say: «Give yourself ample freedom to run, jump and shout as you please. Gymnastic and sporting exercises, music, declamation, drama, walks are very effective means of achieving discipline, fostering morality and preserving health».

The opening parade was attended by the heads of the college, all students and athletes, as well as [past pupils](#) and kindergarten children.

The 100-year-old [Salesian College Band](#), which holds the title of Brazil's oldest high school band, took an active part in the parade and ceremony, performing the Brazilian national anthem.

Eighth-grade high school athletes were invited to carry the torch, which lit up all the days of the competition.

10th National Congress of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco "Weaving Lives: our commitment with Youth, Holiness and Cheerfulness"



Salvador, Brazil - 5 September 2023

The 10th National Congress of Past Pupils of Don Bosco was held from 1 to 3 September at the Leader Formation Centre in Salvador, on the theme "[Weaving lives: our commitment with youth, holiness and joy](#)".

The event brought together [past pupils](#) from various Local Unions spread across Brazil and was a very rich experience, which brought within it a strong current of love, hope and strengthening of the movement.

The participants explored the theme in a very creative and active way, through various dynamics, workshops and conferences. "[Past Pupils like Dominic Savio, embellishing humanity](#)", was the motto of the meeting, which saw the testimonies of past pupils who brought to society the mission of caring for the educational legacy of Don Bosco.

This mission was also renewed with the election of the new President of the National Federation of Past Pupils of Don Bosco - [Daniel Torres](#), a past pupil of the Liceu Salesiano do Salvador (BA), who accepted, emphasising the importance of involving Brazilian past pupils: «I feel challenged, but enthusiastic to contribute even more. I count on each and every one of you so that the National Federation can be an institution of sharing, which trains, which helps, which encourages, and which can transform the lives of so many people!».



Poland

30 years of the Salesian Secondary School in Sokołów Podlaski

Sokołów Podlaski, Poland
September 2023

It was 1 September 1993 when the bells at the Salesian Secondary School in Sokołów Podlaski rang for the first time. Now, on 16 September, the 30th anniversary, a meeting was held to celebrate and retrace the results achieved by the school and remember the people who work and have worked there.

The celebration began at the Cultural Centre in Sokołów, with many guests and the entire school community present to attend some conferences on Don Bosco's education system.

This was followed by an artistic performance, performed by the actors of the school's "Plaudite" theatre club, and a performance of "Sokolowianie Song and Dance", in whose ranks many of the school's



students have been dancing and singing for years. The next part of the ceremony took place in the Church of St John Bosco, with the Holy Mass celebrated by Fr Tadeusz Jarecki, Provincial of Warsaw, and concelebrated by numerous priests.

After Mass and after a small refreshment, a visit was made to the new wing of the school, in the presence of some Past Pupils. Many things have changed over these 30 years, and those involved in the history of the school have changed. It was first directed by Fr Stanisław Bogdanski, then for four years by Fr Julian Dzierzak.

Subsequently, it was entrusted to Fr Dariusz Matuszynski, who ensured the institute a climate of mutual help, trust and security. Currently, the school is led by Fr Stanisław Stachal, who continues to make the institute prosper.



Italy



The lay dimension of Salesian holiness, starting with Mamma Margaret

(ANS - Castelnuovo Don Bosco)
9 September 2023

In the year in which the Rector Major's Strenna drew attention to the lay dimension of Don Bosco's Family, a reflection on Salesian holiness cannot fail to cast a special light on those lay people who have been a leaven of life at the level of heroism.

This is why, in the framework of the third seminar for the promotion of the Causes of Beatification and Canonization of the Salesian Family, the participants in this initiative were confronted with some of these models of Christian life.

With a special focus on Don Bosco's first teacher in the faith, Mamma Margaret, whose opening of the new museum dedicated to her at Capriglio was celebrated

on the same day - Saturday 9 September - by happy coincidence.

On a day that had included a visit to the Salesian holy places on Colle Don Bosco, where John Bosco was born and began to form his character and inclinations, the choice to focus in the afternoon on lay holiness represented a leap from the origins of Salesian holiness to some of its most recent fruits.

Like that of *Akash Bashir, Don Bosco's Past Pupil and the first Pakistani Servant of God*, who was able to bear witness to charity without boundaries even in the season of kamikaze massacres and to literally embrace an attacker who had the intent to create a massacre and was able to tell him straight: *"I will die, but I will not let you enter the Church"*.

In the daily routine of attentive and generous service proceeded the life of the indigenous Bororo Simao, in Meruri, in the interior of Brazil.

A mason, herbalist and catechist, his was a *"next door"* holiness, made up of small gestures towards everyone, until he stepped up to the plate in the donation of his life in aid of Salesian missionary Fr Rudolf Lunkenbein, who was attacked by those who wanted to invade the mission territories.

With his gesture he sealed in eternity and in blood the bond between the Salesians and the natives of those lands.

Vera Grita's holiness was different, forged from an early age by poverty, family estrangement, and then illness. Animated, however, by a generous and optimistic spirit, she lived the Salesian charism in the





educational dedication to children, especially those "from the peripheries"; and after a life of deep devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist, she received in apparition from the Lord the mandate to form the Work of the Living Tabernacles, groups of faithful who place Jesus in the Eucharist at the centre of their lives and carry Him and give Him in their daily lives.

The last testimony concerned the lesser known figure of Alexandre Planas, "the deaf friar" as he was known in Vicenç dels Horts, Spain.

Marked from birth by severe physical disabilities, for 28 years he was practically the sole guardian of the Salesian charism widespread in that city, offering everyone the example of a life of poverty, prayer and dedication to his neighbour.

He died a martyr's death during the Civil War for never having denied either the Cross or the defence of "his" home.

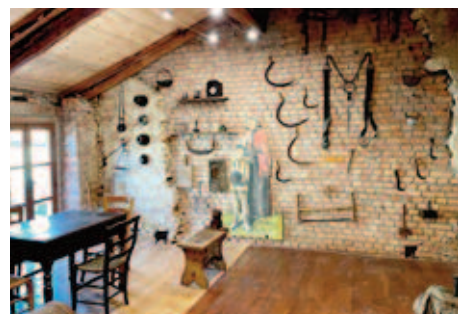
«We could consider him the patron of Salesian works without a community», said the Central Delegate for the Secretariat for the Salesian Family, Fr Joan Lluís Playá, while presenting him.

The journey on the trail of Salesian lay holiness finally ended with a return to the roots, arriving in Capriglio, Mamma Margaret's birthplace.

For Don Bosco's Mamma, too, it began with a talk on her figure, held in the church of San Martino - where the Venerable was baptised - by Diego Occhiena, promoter of her Cause, as well as her distant relative. Three fundamental aspects were highlighted by the speaker: holiness lived within the Church - as a woman of prayer and

educator in the faith of her children; daily holiness - through the diligent service of wife, worker and mother; missionary holiness - concretized in the maternal and caring service following her son to Valdocco.

Then followed the most moving homage to Mamma Margaret, a few metres away, in what was once Don Bosco's school. There, after the ritual speeches and the blessing officiated by Fr Pierluigi Cameroni, Postulator General of the Causes of the Saints of the Salesian Family, the Mayor of Capriglio, surrounded by the mayors of the neighbouring municipalities, inaugurated the new museum dedicated to the Venerable: several rooms and halls on several floors collecting facts about the life of Mamma Margaret and the Saint of Youth, as well as presenting other figures of holiness and traditions of that area.



Italy



SALESIAN BROTHER RICCARDO RACCA'S dream for Sierra Leone

(ANS - Cuneo) – 6 July 2023

A new way of being a missionary? The people of Cuneo, always open to innovation, also convey this attitude to those who leave the province to seek their vocation elsewhere. Whether it is a specialist who goes to the big cities, an investor who thinks big, a traveller who invents a trade, the peasant DNA continuously generates skills to adapt and the search for efficiency.

And it was for a Salesian born in Piasco and formed at Fossano, who took an "entrepreneurial" spirit from his homeland that is very useful in his mission in Africa: first in Nigeria, then in Ghana, now in Sierra Leone.

He is Riccardo Racca, Salesian Brother, born in 1954, who shared with "La Fedeltà" (a weekly) a dip into his past as a boy who grew up between his parents' grocery store and rotisserie and the parish courtyard, passing through elementary school and girls with their playmates.

While carrying out his mission as a son of Don Bosco, involved in the management of the vocational school and the oratory, Bro. Riccardo Racca goes visiting young people in their cell without trial and without any educational accompaniment.

Occasionally a "miracle" occurs, such as the case of a boy missing one leg who managed to get treatment by obtaining permits to leave prison, overcoming shyness and just accepting things. Now, having served his sentence, he is free to move and



face life taking his destiny in hand. The expert gaze of the farmer led Salesian Brother Racca to explore the possibilities of enhancing a plant used by the local population for food purposes. This was the moringa, also called the "radish tree", up to 7 metres in height and eminently exploitable.

The roots are edible, the leaves are tasty, the tender pods can be used in salads, the seeds also provide oil used for cosmetics. What is important is that its properties can be a response to the dietary needs of large communities: the vitamins, proteins, calcium, antioxidants that moringa contains are valuable additives, also through the drying of the leaves that makes them durable, becoming condiments or herbal tea bases.

This plant was referred to as a "superfood" in 2022 thanks to the promotional activity that Bro. Racca started a few years ago. He made use of his regular visits to Italy

and Europe to study it, consider the possibilities of extensive cultivation in Sierra Leone, and make contact with experts and potential buyers of moringa powder. The dream is in fact that the farmers in Bo, currently a group of about twenty families in a cooperative run by the mission, can produce and treat the product for export as well: this trade would thus become a first step towards the self-sustainability of the Salesian presence.

From this resources could be added to those that already today many benefactors entrust to *Missioni Don Bosco* to defend the most fragile young people: the future foresees the strengthening of the vocational school, socio-educational services, the formation of new Salesians to give a future to the congregation in Sierra Leone.

When returning from time to time, Bro. Riccardo Racca finds his sister in Piasco, who is the family anchor and spiritual support once also provided by his parents, and the new members of the Salesian work in Fossano and his fellow students who have become professionals. He finds the resources there to nurture his dream that advances - as the Holy Founder did - with feet on the ground.

The Piedmontese Association of Past Pupils of Salesian Schools has enthusiastically embraced this project. The "miracle" will be the first container that will be filled in Bo to export moringa in its various forms instead of leaving Italy to bring aid.

Source: La Fedeltà



Dominican Republic

Regional Meeting of Formation Delegates from Interamerica

(ANS – Jarabacoa) – 18 September 2023

A meeting of Formation Delegates from the Interamerica Region began on Monday 11 September at the *Salesian Pinar Quemado Centre for Promotion and Formation*, located in the well-known city of “eternal spring”, in Jarabacoa, in the Dominican Republic.

Welcomed to the rhythm of the merengue by a group of young past pupils and leaders, the Formation Delegates from the Provinces arrived at the Salesian house: from the United States West (SUO), Mexico-Guadalajara (MEG), Mexico-Mexico (MEM), Central America (CAM), Venezuela (VEN), Ecuador (ECU), Colombia-Medellín (COM), Colombia-Bogotá (cob), Peru (PER) and the Antilles (ANT).

The meeting, led by the collaborator from the Formation Sector in America, Fr Guido Errico, and the Coordinator of the Regional Commission for Formation, Fr José An-

tonio Santis Pinedo, began on Tuesday, 12 September, with the presentation of work by Fr Santis Pinedo and the logistics, secretarial and communication teams involved in the event.

For his part, Fr Ivo Coelho, General Councillor for Formation, connected online from Turin to offer his greetings to participants and provided some updates on the work to be carried out; he began immediately with a SWOT analysis of formation in the Provinces of the Interamerica Region, examining strengths, areas for improvement,

opportunities and risks.

Later as a *Salesian goodnight* message, Fr Errico recalled that for Don Bosco the first place in the Oratory was the chapel, and that he ensured that young people experienced his fatherly kindness.

«*Don Bosco was a spiritual man who shared his bread and who gave his very being as an expression of God's fatherhood*» he said.

The formation offers at formation centres in Quito (Ecuador), Berkeley (California) and the Regional Centre for Specific Formation of the Salesian Brother (Cresco - Mexico) were presented on Wednesday 13th, and included the current challenges that the centres face. Contributions being developed for the benefit of the Provinces in relation to joint formation were also highlighted on this occasion. The meeting ended on Saturday, 16 September in Santo Domingo.



Kenya



Bro. Marino Bois, SDB: an international symbol of Salesian vocational training

(ANS- Elobehid) – 28 July 2023

The sixty years of missionary life of Bro. Marino Bois, Salesian Brother originally from Valle d'Aosta, Italy, are an extraordinary, rich and intense journey in the world of Salesian vocational formation. Born in 1942 in Valgrisenche, after completing his studies to become a Salesian, he immediately made himself available to go on mission, spending a few years at the school for technical teachers at Rebaudengo in Turin.

At that time there was a great fervour for missions. Bro. Bois tells us that *«numerous missionaries told us about the activities they followed in mission lands. Many of my companions made the request to go, and it was possible to request where to go, but the final decision was made by the superiors, based on concrete needs on the ground. I was among the three who had chosen to go to Korea, but then no one called me, so I thought my mission would be in Italy.*

At the end of the year I received the letter from the Rector Major. They asked me if I was still available to go; I answered yes and went immediately to my church. The door was closed, but I still prayed before the church to thank the Lord who had opened the doors to the missions for me».

It was 1963 when Marino Bois packed his bags for Korea, but first made a stopover in Mumbai, India, where two of his aunts had left very young from the Aosta Valley –



two people who gave their whole lives for missions. They looked after the education and instruction of young Indian girls. *«From there I took my first plane. It still had propellers and was not fully pressurised. I remember that my ears hurt after a few hours.*

The aim of the mission was to manage a large vocational technical school, in a country that was still struggling to recover after the disaster of the war between North and South (1950-1953) and the military regime».

After several years in the Far East, his missionary path landed him in Africa, precisely in Guinea Conkary, in Kankan. After 20 years of communism and Maoism, the nation had reached absolute disaster.

After the regime, the newly elected President of the country, a Muslim, asked the Pope to send back the missionaries who had been previously expelled and to found a vocational school. Bro. Bois was part of the first group of missionaries who started that mission.

«When I left, I had \$20,000, a gift from Korean benefactors», he recounts. «The sum was small for the ambitious project of founding a vocational school. I became a 'mendicant friar' and went to the main mechanics schools in Piedmont asking for help.

They opened their warehouses of things that might be useful in the future and I

found many things that I had on my list for the new workshop. Once this first phase was over, I went to the tool and second-hand machine shops.

I was able to find what was needed to satisfy the list of materials. In the meantime, Providence had inflated the 20,000 so that it was possible to buy everything I needed. A former student, who had also been my teacher, put me in touch with a company that sold steel bars. The owner helped us a lot. It was really providential help. I had one week left and I had three containers to fill. I called my brother Saverio for help. Putting our sweat together, we managed to ship everything».

From Turin they sent three containers full of machinery. In a month he managed to connect the machines and make them work, to then be able to welcome the first group of boys and start the first vocational training courses: the village organised great celebrations for that event.

All was going well when the Mission Councillor sent him a new obedience: Sudan. «I was very depressed» Bro. Bois continued.

«I went to the rector, a holy person. He saw the letter and said to me, "This is obedience, you must go; Providence will think of us". And so it happened».

The superiors gave him more resources for Sudan. «Shopping and shipping worked well. Once the workbenches were done and

the laboratory set up, we went to the refugee camp. It had never happened to me before to see such a poor place. We found 20 young people with a great desire to learn and we started school. The bishop of Khartoum also came for the inauguration. It felt like a dream».

After two years, according to the agreements, he returned to the mission in Korea, while another Brother, James Comino, proved to be the ideal man to take over the work in Sudan.

He then returned to South Korea and served for several years including in other Asian situations, always following Salesian Vocational Formation.

So he was sent to Kenya, to Elobehid, and in recent years he has collaborated again with the Salesians in Sudan to repair many of the machines he brought so many years ago, now suffering from the passage of time. While he was back in Kenya for a break, war broke out in Sudan; now it is impossible for him to return, but as soon as conditions allow, he plans to return to that country to complete the work.

His is an extraordinary missionary vocation, which even today, at the age of 81, has not faded, on the contrary.

For more information about him and his missionary experiences, visit:

www.missionidonbosco.it



Pakistan



The young man and the minister who irrigated the land of Pakistan with their blood

Akash Bahir and Shahbaz Bhatti are among the "new martyrs witnesses of the faith" of the last 25 years for which the Pope has set up a special Commission in view of the Jubilee. Two important figures above all because they flourished in a nation with an Islamic majority where Christian communities live as discriminated against.

(Vatican News - 8 July 2023)

They are two witnesses of the faith of our time who have watered with their blood the land of Pakistan, where they lived and where they gave their lives for love of Christ: the young Akash Bahir and the minister Shahbaz Bhatti. The first sacrificed himself to protect the faithful of his parish from a terrorist attack on March 15, 2015 while the Sunday Eucharist was being celebrated in the Catholic Church of Saint John, in Lahore. He hugged and pushed back the suicide bomber and exploded with him.

The second figure, well known internationally for the public office he held, was federal minister for minorities: he was killed on March 2, 2011 in Islamabad by a terrorist commando who intended to stop his evangelical commitment in favor of the poor, the marginalized, the most vulnerable. Among the "new martyrs witnesses of the faith" of the last 25 years on which the Pope has relaunched attention by setting up a special Commission in view of the Jubilee, the two are important figures above all because they flourished in a nation like Pakistan, where Christian communities live as minorities discriminated against and at times persecuted. In a difficult context, with an Islamic majority, crossed by ferments of radicalism and extremism, the two offered the witness of a simple and



strong faith, deep and humble and, in the sign of the Gospel Beatitudes, ready to give a sign of love to the enemy. They are two people to whom today the Church of the Asian country and the whole world can look, drawing inspiration for fidelity to the baptismal vocation and mission, that of being disciples of Christ to the end, without compromise or lukewarmness.

Akash from 31 January 2022 became the first "servant of God" in the history of the Pakistani Church: the archdiocese of Lahore, in fact, officially opened the diocesan phase of the process for his beatification, with the help of the Salesians of St. John Bosco, who had accompanied the growth and course of study of the young Bashir in their schools.

The Commission and the diocesan tribunal are working hard and, as reported by the Archbishop of Lahore, Sebastian Shaw, this phase should be concluded within this year. «We know that the Lord blesses our steps and that this experience of self-sacrifice will bear fruit in our community», the prelate confidently observed, also ascribing to the figure of Akash the impressive flowe-

ring of vocations to the priesthood and religious life recorded in recent years in his diocesan community.

The history, human story and political commitment of Shahbaz Bhatti, who was killed at the age of 39, are remembered and celebrated every year in Pakistan by Christian communities of all denominations on the anniversary of his death. The moving words of his spiritual testament, «I just want a place at the feet of Jesus», and his desire to be conformed to Christ in every moment and every gesture of his existence have left an indelible mark on the conscience of the faithful, but also a mark of gratitude in all sectors of society.

His mission to «build a just, peaceful and tolerant society in Pakistan in which religious minorities can exercise equal rights and live in peace and harmony» remains alive, says Cardinal Joseph Coutts, Archbishop Emeritus of Karachi, who knew and followed him from his youth. Bhatti was an ambassador for interreligious harmony and human rights and is today «a symbol of the struggle for the rights of the oppressed», the cardinal recalls. A man of mild character, "he will always be remembered as a voice for the voiceless and a standard bearer of dialogue, understood as a means to promote equal dignity for all, justice and peace," he concludes.

Paolo Affatato



Pakistan

Economer General Bro. Jean Paul Muller visits Salesian presences in the country

Lahore, Pakistan - 4 September 2023

From 1 to 3 September, Salesian Brother Jean Paul Muller, Economer General of the Salesian Congregation, visited the Salesian presences in Pakistan.

They were intense days, in which Bro. Jean Paul Muller made the closeness of the Congregation and the vitality of Don Bosco's charism felt.

In a very family-like atmosphere, in which he also shared various moments in the lives of the numerous young boarders, he had meetings with the Salesian community, with the staff of teachers and trainers, with the boys and girls of the school, and with the students of the Technical Centre.

The Economer General visited the mechanics, welding, carpentry and computer workshops, the electricians' courses, and the refrigeration techniques workshop. In



addition, he presented diplomas to 60 girls and boys who have recently completed the beauticians' and barbers' courses.



Bro. Muller also had a long meeting with the Salesian Family groups present in Lahore: Salesian Cooperators, Past Pupils and the Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA).

Another very intense moment was the visit to the grave of former student Akash Bashir, who in 2015 sacrificed his life to foil a suicide bomb attack in St John's parish in Youhanabad, on the outskirts of Lahore.

The visit to the grave was followed by a very intimate and touching moment with Akash's family.



Bro. Muller's advice and requests will prove very valuable in better serving the thousands of young people who daily attend the Salesian home in Lahore.

Piero Ramello, SDB



India



"ALL IN THE FAMILY"

A memorable book on the 208th birthday of D.Bosco

(ANS – Shillong) - 17 August 2023

16th August is memorable for Salesians of Don Bosco across the globe as it marks the birth date of Don Bosco himself, the founder and Father of this vast congregation and big Salesian family present in more than 134 countries.

It was a special day in which the Fathers, Brothers, young people, [past pupils](#) and various Salesian family members gathered together at *Don Bosco Sunnyside*, the Salesian Novitiate of Shillong province to commemorate his Birthday in heaven.

This year, the birthday celebration was even more memorable as the Provincial Rev Fr. Paul D Lyngkot released a book titled, "*All in a family*" authored by veteran Salesians in the presence of the Novice master, the socius, the dean of studies, the assistant and the novices. The first copy of the book was given to the Novice master.



All in the family is a compilation authored by Fathers Anthony Mampra, John Kalapura, Roland Kharkrang, D John and Thomas Puliparambil and also FMA Sister Eugenia Laloo and VSDB Sister Martha Masynting.

The book provides insight into the vibrant and dynamic Salesian life in the last 100 years and more in India and particularly in the North East India.

It is also a testament to the tireless and unwavering commitment of the Salesian Family members besides showcasing to the world the richness and diversity of the Salesian Charism fabricated in the local cultures of the North East.

Indeed this book will serve as a source of inspiration and motivation for all readers specially the Salesians in the North East who recently celebrated the Centenary of the Arrival of the Salesian presence in the North East India.



Fr. Bart Decancq officially takes charge as the new provincial of BEN Province

(ANS – Belgium) - 3 July 2023

On Saturday 1 July 2023, Fr. Bart Decancq was officially installed as the provincial of the Salesians of Don Bosco in Flanders and the Netherlands. During the Salesian-style celebration, the installation took place and the necessary documents were signed in the presence of Fr. Roman Jachimowicz, the Regional Councillor for Central and Northern Europe region.

During the Eucharist, the 300 invited guests witnessed the installation of Fr. Bart as the new provincial.

It was followed by a small programme during which the outgoing provincial Fr. Wilfried Wambeke was honoured and Fr. Bart Decancq was presented and welcomed.

The celebration was graced with beautiful music by *Floris and the Flames*. *Floris is a former pupil of Don Bosco Hechtel* and has already gained international fame as a violinist.

Fr. Bart begins now a six-year period of leading the Salesian Province of Flanders-Netherlands as the provincial. He looks back on his past 44 years as a Salesian. «*It soon became clear that my happiness lay with the Salesians*», says Fr. Bart. Recalling his yester years, he remarks: «*In my various assignments, thanks to a lot to my fellow brothers and Don Bosco workers, I was able to learn and experience what a Salesian life is at the service of young people. The years of studying theology, getting responsibility in the Cadre School and my period at the Leuven District Playgrounds were invaluable. I had the opportunity to*



get my master's degree in Rome and was taught by the great experts of Salesianity: Pietro Stella, Pietro Braido, Jacques Schepens and others who taught us critically and forward-looking who Don Bosco was, what he had in mind and how his style of education remains very relevant. They were great years with the young people of the oratorio in Rome». Fr. Bart has served the province in various capacities with a diverse experiences.

«*After many years in a managerial position (including as delegate director of the Don Bosco Education Centre and as school director in Don Bosco Kortrijk and Don Bosco Hechtel), the next challenge now awaits. As a child, I often played school with my siblings. My sisters were the pupils, my brother Hans the teacher and I was the*

headmaster. That was the condition, otherwise I didn't participate», Bart says with a quip. «*Principal I have already been in the meantime, but provincial... I never practiced that before*».

When Fr. Bart received the message from the Regional Councillor Fr. Roman Jachimowicz on 12 December 2022, he already knew what that meant.

«*When the Superior General informed me immediately afterwards that - after consultation with fellow brothers and consultation within the main council - I would become the next provincial, I thought of the past years of being a happy Salesian with the support of fellow brothers and so many. The messages that touched me most were from fellow brothers who wrote: "Thank you for taking up this task". With the support of my fellow brothers, the family,*

the Salesian Family and the movement around Don Bosco, I want to take up this task and keep the inspiration of Don Bosco alive with the many committed people in Flanders and the Netherlands. Thank you for the trust, your support and prayers!».

Fr. Bart is very much concerned and optimistic about the responsibility entrusted to him. He affirms on a positive note: «*We have a Salesian characteristic that we must never deny: the "assistance"; being close to people in a cordial way. An engaged closeness, being reachable and receptive. It is not about how we get the most out of our staff and our students, but how we bring out the best in them. We need to create that family atmosphere, so that they can be at their best? Being present and accessible!*».

Italy



Installation of the new Superior of the Lombardy-Emilia Province: FR ROBERTO DAL MOLIN



Milan, Italy – 24 July 2023

On the morning of Saturday 22 July, at the Minor Basilica of St Augustine in Milan, the new Superior of the Salesian Province of Lombardy-Emilia (ILE), Fr Roberto Dal Molin, took office. The installation ceremony, together with the celebration of Mass, was led by Fr Juan Carlos Pérez Godoy, Councillor for the Mediterranean Region. Also present was Father Giuliano Giacomazzi, former ILE Provincial, who was appointed to the office of the Centro Nazionale Opere Salesiane – Formazione e Aggiornamento Professionale (National Salesian Works Centre - Training and

Professional Updating)(CNOS-FAP), based in Rome. The ceremony was attended by numerous representatives of the Salesian Communities from ILE, who came to thank Fr Giacomazzi and welcome Fr Dal Molin, together with various Provincials, Salesians and collaborators who had come from the other Italian Provinces. On behalf of the Salesian Family, the Provincial of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians of the Lombardy Province (ILO), Sr Stefania Saccuman, with many Sisters, as well as groups of Salesian Cooperators, Past Pupils, missionary groups and also young people from the houses, took part. A special mention, emphasised in the thanks by Fr Giuliano Giacomazzi, was reserved for the leaders of the Salesian Works in Varese and Castel de' Britti entrusted to management by the laity.

Malta



National Meeting on Empowering Change for Past Pupils and Friends of Don Bosco in Malta



Malta – 10 July 2023

On 4th July 2023, the Maltese Federation witnessed an incredible gathering of 30 active participants at a special National Meeting of Past Pupils and Friends of Don Bosco. The meeting started with the presentations of two GEX members, Marica Aquilina and Ariana Abela, who shared their insights on innovative social and educational projects and activities by the National Federation of Past Pupils of Don Bosco.

The flagship projects of *CheckIn* and *SYinc* were presented as examples of best practice on how the organisation can break the stigma around change and emphasize its positive impact especially through showing social commitment and solidarity with the young. Present for this National Meeting was the President of the World Confederation, Mr Bryan Magro who provided updates and shifted the main focus on how we can shape the future of the past pupils and friends of Don Bosco organisations especially on the charism, spirituality, mission, and prospective developments on working with the young.

One of the key takeaways from the event was the importance of adaptability and responding to signs of the times. Participants eagerly engaged in thought-provoking discussions, sharing their experiences and challenges when faced with the prospect of change. The supportive environment fostered by the participants allowed everyone to openly express their fears and concerns while receiving encouragement and guidance from the leaders of the National Federation. The final message was given in the traditional goodnight by the National Delegate Fr Jake Mamo who spoke about the need to continue our journey of change hand-in-hand, creating the space for everyone in the Salesian Family.



Colombia

SALESIANITY

A word in your ear

Newsletter of the SDB Alumni Association - St. Peter Claver Province
The Alumni Association - Vol. 14 - No. 68 - June 2023

Once again with you, dear friends, dear Salesian family.

In the month of June, the month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, yes indeed, a very Salesian month. Why is that? Because the Salesian spirit is inspired by the kind heart of Jesus, as stated in the constitutions of the Salesians of Don Bosco, article 11, "*The Salesian spirit finds its model and its source in the very heart of Jesus*", and we are sensitive to some very special traits of Jesus the Good Shepherd, one of them, his predilection for the little ones and the poor, and another very valuable one, his attitude as a good shepherd who conquers with gentleness and self-giving.

Our Salesian vocation, the spirit of Don Bosco, impels us to be witnesses of goodness, to conquer the world, especially the hearts of young people, with goodness, with gentleness, with mercy, with compassion, and this is precisely what makes the Salesian Pastoral heart effective, Pastoral Charity, which is nothing other than that apostolic impulse that moves us to seek souls and serve God alone, inspired by the Christ of the Gospel, in the sacred heart of the child of God.

Dear friends, we also celebrate with all of you [the month of the Salesian Past Pupils](#), 24 June, the date on which we remember when the [Past Pupils of Don Bosco](#) look for him, express their affection, their gratitude and commit themselves to continue in the world with their families, in their environ-



ments, living the spirit learned in the Salesian environment, living the spirit learned in the Salesian environment.

A Salesian is a person who lives charity, who dares to make charity the project of his life. This is Don Bosco's invitation to his first Salesians, to make a practical exercise of charity; a Salesian student is one who learns in the Salesian house, the sensitivity for charity, in gestures and concrete acts of kindness. And then, [a former student is one who puts into practice in his world, in his reality, the sensitivity for Charity](#).

[Dear Past Pupils](#), you are the great ones, the ones responsible for making Salesian sensitivity visible in the Charity of your concrete works, and I therefore invite you to live the values you have learnt.

The Salesian environment is a welcoming home, dear friends, you are a welcoming home when you are able to open your arms with kindness to make others feel good, not only a welcoming home, but also a parish

that evangelises, that is, when you are able to make the Gospel your life project, and Jesus and Mary your friends, to live Christian principles and from there transform the world with kindness.

This Salesian house, where they spent so much time, is also a courtyard where friendship is shared, an important value, friendship, sensitivity to others, the ability to go out to meet others; and the Salesian environment, a school that educates for life, values learned: kindness, gentleness, understanding, sensitivity to the suffering of others.

This is a Salesian alumnus, a man, a woman, a person, who with the heart of Don Bosco, is today able to go out into the world, to preach the Gospel, doing works of charity and goodness.

And finally, a word to the ear. Let us all remember that it is life that speaks of the beautiful traces that others have left in us, let us leave beautiful traces in others, as Christ the Good Shepherd has left them in us and let us ask the Lord, the Good Shepherd, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to give us a heart like his, capable of loving and blessing humanity.

May God bless you. Best wishes to all of you.

P. John Jairo Gómez, SDB
COB Inspector

Africa



Greetings from Don Bosco Tech Africa Network



Message from the Director...

I am writing these words from Dakar Senegal, where I attended the SAAM (Supporting Alliance for African Mobility) steering committee meeting and then visited the TVET centres in Senegal. My last official visit as director of DBTech Africa.

First and foremost, I would like to congratulate Don Bosco Youth Technical Institute Lilongwe for taking part in the Malawi Central Region TVET skills competition and for bagging the first place in Tailoring and Fashion Design and second place in Motor Vehicle Mechanics. Secondly,

I would like to congratulate St. Joseph VTC Kamuli for organising the Global Impact Challenge on Skills Training in collaboration with World Skills International.

Our students were able to showcase their skills in line with WorldSkills standards. Congratulations to Don Bosco Kamuli as well. It is this sort of exposure that make our students and graduates to be confident and believe in themselves.

Recently Don Bosco Tech Africa also received memberships in two large international organisations. One is EVBB, one of Europe's largest TVET networks. The other is Worlddidac, where DBTA has become an affiliate member.

These affiliations have opened up our institutions to greater access to resources



and opportunities.

Many of our institutions recently *celebrated World Environment Day and Laudato Si week*. There is a growing awareness of environment-friendly initiatives and attitudes in our training centres.

We need to continue to keep it up and promote it.

Some of the other partnership meetings that took place recently include participation at the African Union level preparatory meeting for World Skills Africa Competition preparations and the opening of another centre of excellence in Oysterbay, Dar Es Salaam for Air Conditioning and Refrigeration, in collaboration with Daikin International.

On the side of visits to the provinces, we have been able to visit the training centres

in Togo, Ghana and Liberia in the AOS province and Senegal in the ADN province.

Thanks to all for the support and collaboration extended. DBTA team was also involved in formulating the communication strategy in Malawi and South Sudan.

Many of our Job Service Offices and Centers have been involved in job fairs, open days, round table discussions etc. These are all opportunities that we are opening for our young people for obtaining decent jobs. Congratulations and keep it up.

Finally, after nine years of service at DBTA, the congregation has requested me to take up another responsibility as the Provincial of AFE (Africa East) Province. I will still remain close to DBTA as its Board Chairman. But I would like to take this opportunity to thank in a very special way all the Provincials, P-TVETs, P-JSOs, Youth Ministry Delegates, Training Centre Managers, Provincial Economers, collaborators, donors, network partners and especially my dear colleagues in the office for trusting me and helping me to be of service to our dear young people through you.

Thank you and May God Bless you all.

Yours in Don Bosco,

Fr. George Tharaniyil (TJ) SDB Director
Don Bosco Tech Africa



Thailand

Don Bosco Magazine Charity Concert

Bangkok, Thailand – 17 July 2023

On July 15, 2023, the Salesian Press Department, led by Father Ekasit Tanhakulthorn who is in charge of the Salesian Social Communications Commission along with the Board of Directors of the Media Department, organized a charity concert called "*Happy Day - Happy Time Reminiscent of The Beatles*" at *The Better Music Academy, Bangna, Bangkok*, to contribute to the *Don Bosco magazine* fund and to thank the patrons of the magazine.

At the beginning of the event, Mrs. Kingdao Thiwawanwong, a pianist extraordinaire, played the piano to lull the audience. Then, Bishop Joseph Prathan Sridarunsil, SDB, presided at the opening along with giving souvenirs to the benefactors of the magazine.

After that was the concert by Aisoon Thiwawanwong, an artist known as "*The Only Beatles of Thailand*", with a tone and style of singing as close as possible to the origi-



nal.

He came to create joy for the guests together with The Better Band. Attending the event were Salesian confreres the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, *past pupils* of the Salesian seminary and the general public, who attended the concert in a happy family atmosphere.

Moreover, the *Don Bosco Magazine* is one of the 67 editions of the *Salesian magazine* published in 32 languages and distributed in 134 countries.

The *Don Bosco Magazine* was first printed in 1958, and now it is in its 65th year. Since this magazine is not a profit-seeking enterprise, expenses, therefore, are prominent and are increasing. Because of this, in May 2019, the Board of Directors of Don Bosco Magazine decided to put up a 'fund' to support the expenses borne by the Province and to manage the printing in a more systematic way. This move has gained the support of any patrons.

Argentina



Salesians present at the "Cammini e Saponi" fair

Buenos Aires, Argentina – 18 July 2023

The traditional "Cammini e Saponi" fair took place in Buenos Aires from 6 to 9 July, in which the Salesian *Par las Jóvenes* organisation also took part.



Around 100,000 people attended the event, thus having the opportunity to learn more about the activities of *Par las Jóvenes*. In particular, the Salesian pavilion sold products made by the Salesian Agro-Technical Schools, in which young people participate first-hand in the production process.

The proceeds from the sales are earmarked for educational activities such as the creation of a Vocational Training Centre in Salta.

Those present were then able to meet the most outstanding Past Pupils from both Salesian Provinces of Argentina, including Charly Martinic, winner of the gastronomy-themed TV programme "BakeOff". Finally, it should be noted that the Superior of the Argentina

South Province (ARS), Fr Darío Perera, also took part in the event.

Poland



Salesian past pupil receives badge of honour for merit in Polish culture for his 60 years as organist in the parish of St Stanislaus Kostka

Krakow, Poland - 29 September 2023

The Salesian parish of *St Stanislaus Kostka* in Krakow-Dbniki has been the scene of several important celebrations in recent days.



Photo: Fr Edward Lisowski SDB

On 16 September, the Salesian former pupil, Maestro Mieczysław Tuleja, was celebrated for his 60th anniversary of service as organist in the Salesian parish.

The event was experienced with a Mass, at the end of which there were speeches by former pupils of the Maestro, including many famous musicians who performed a concert in his honour.

Maestro Mieczysław Tuleja was then presented with the Polish Culture Merit Badge of Honour by the Minister of Culture, Piotr Gliński,

A parish celebration followed the next day, during which the new altar dedicated to St Stanislaus Kostka, the work of Salesian confreres Fr Robert and Fr Leszek Kruczek, was blessed.



Saint Rose of Lima: a sign of faith, love, mercy and strength

(ANS - Lima) – 5 September 2023

In a family atmosphere and in front of hundreds of faithful, the Pilgrimage took place last Saturday, 2 September 2023, in honour of Saint Rose of Lima, patron saint of the Salesians and of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) in Peru.



The Salesians of Don Bosco, the FMA, Salesian Cooperators, Volunteers of Don Bosco (VDB) and Volunteers with Don Bosco (CDB), the Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA), the Damas Salesianas, Past Pupils of Don Bosco, the Caritas Sisters of Jesus and the young people from Salesian works in Breña, Callao, Rimac, Magdalena del Mar and Chosica participated in this moment of fraternity.



Salesian flags were already waving over the Basilica and Sanctuary dedicated to the Saint from 7.30 in the morning, and as the minutes passed, the presence of young people and members of the Salesian Family became stronger and stronger near Viale Tacna where the church is located.



Before the beginning of the Eucharist there was a moment of meditation and recollection for Salesian Family Groups reflecting on the figure of the Patron Saint.

At the end of the work, each group gathered to write a letter addressed to St Rose, in which they expressed their gratitude, their wishes and intentions.

The Holy Mass began at 9 a.m. with Fr Juan Pablo Alcas, Provincial of the Salesians in Peru (PER) as main celebrant, and was concelebrated by about 10 Salesian priests.



Before beginning the celebration, the Provincial thanked the assembled faithful for their presence. *«It is good to have you here. We all came to make a pilgrimage together to our sister Rose. We entrust ourselves to her as a Salesian Family, and we are preparing to live a youthful experience with devotion»*, he said with joy.

In another moment Fr Alcas stressed the value of celebrating this feast. *«It is a beautiful moment, a sign of unity between young people and members of the Salesian Family»*.

During the homily, the Superior presented some of the most important features of Saint Rose of Lima. *«Rose of Lima knew how to be a parable, a sign of God's love.*

And today her example encourages us as a Salesian Family to deepen our existence as Peruvians, in our apostolate and in our commitment to the most needy young people. She motivates us».

Rose of Lima, who showed great mercy towards her brothers and sisters during her life, felt the need to give herself to others; and that is precisely why the Salesians in Peru named her patroness of their Province.

At the end of the Mass, there was still time to make a symbolic and moving gesture: Fr Alcas went to the "Well of Desires" located on the grounds of the sanctuary and deposited the letters that the members of each group had previously written to St Rose.

Source: Salesiani del Perù

France



“Don Bosco Landser” centre inaugurates new complex named after the school's founder, Salesian Fr Victor Kolmer

(ANS - Landser) - 27 June 2023

9 and 10 June 2023 were two days of festivities for the “Don Bosco Landser” centre in France, held under the theme “*Our students have talent*”. The programme included an open day for the whole community (school, institute, lycée) attended by over 1,000 young people, but above all the official inauguration of the new “*Espace Kolmer*”.

From 30 November 2022, the pupils of the five sixth and seventh grade classes will occupy the brand new premises of the “*Espace Kolmer*”, the institute's new complex located 200 metres from the rest of the school.

This new school complex occupies the site of the former Landser Convent, formerly inhabited by the Capuchin Friars Minor (1655-1791), the Redemptorists (1842-1929) and then the Redemptorist Sisters (1931-2012).

The “Don Bosco” association of Landser bought the property after the departure of



the nuns, to turn it into a place of education.

Because the convent buildings were unsuitable and could not be renovated to today's standards, they had to be demolished and rebuilt from scratch. The work began in November 2019 and was completed in the autumn of 2022, despite difficulties with the Covid pandemic. Of the old buildings, only the chapel remains, which will be converted into a cultural space.

The new building, designed by architect Jean Vogel, follows the layout of the old monastery, with an inner patio reminiscent of the original cloister. It is on three levels, with nine large classrooms of almost 100 m² and numerous other rooms for group work.

The new building is named “*Espace Kolmer*” in homage to Salesian Fr Victor Kolmer (1888-1972), who ‘founded’ the Salesian house in Landser in 1929.

The official inauguration ceremony took place in the presence of numerous guests representing all the collaborators and organisations involved in this project: the Sa-



lesian tutelary administration, with Mr Sébastien Robert, Salesian coadjutor, Provincial Treasurer, and Mr Sébastien Lerondel, Delegate for tutelary administration; Alsace Catholic Education, with Bishop Christian Kratz, Auxiliary Bishop of Strasbourg, and Patrick Wolf, Diocesan Director; the "Collectivité Européenne d'Alsace" and elected sector representatives; the partners; the "Collectivité Européenne d'Alsace" and elected sector representatives; the "Collectivité Européenne d'Alsace" and the "Collectivité de l'Alsace". Christian Kratz, Auxiliary Bishop of Strasbourg, and Patrick Wolf, Diocesan Director; the representatives of the "Collectivité Européenne d'Alsace" and the elected representatives of the sector; the financial partners; the builders who worked on the building site and, of course, the entire "Don Bosco Landser" educational community. Board President Jean-Marc Hassler, Headmaster Alain Werner and Director Daniel Adrian, who is also mayor of Landser and member of the Alsace Council, took the stage to present this "new place for living, learning and working". The sixth-year and



secondary school students then provided entertainment with songs, music and sketches. The ceremony ended with the blessing of the premises and staff by Bishop Kratz and the unveiling of a bust of Don Bosco, created by artist Dan Robert. At the same time, an open day on the theme "*Our students are talented*" involved all members of the educational community: students of all levels, teachers and educational staff, parents' association and [alumni association](#), etc.

Exhibitions, scientific and sports presentations and demonstrations, theatrical and musical performances highlighted the achievements of the students and their class projects; and during the two days, hundreds of visitors, old and new, visited the premises: parents of current pupils, pupils who will join the school next term, but also many former pupils, friends and benefactors of the Landser 'house', who came from all over the region for this special occasion.

Source: Don Bosco Aujourd'hui

Brazil



"NORDESTÃO SALESIANO 2023": cultural and sporting enrichment, in a family atmosphere

(ANS - Recife) - 12 July 2023

Nordestão Salesiano is the largest sports event of the Salesian Schools Network of Brazil (RSB-Schools), and has been held since 1984.

This year the competition took place in Recife, at the Salesian Institute of the Sacred Heart and saw in total some 3,000 students/athletes from 16 Salesian works of the Province of Brazil-Recife (BRE) involved, competing in several competitions of Dance, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Judo, Karate, Swimming, Volleyball, Beach Volleyball, Chess, Basketball, Futsal and Handball.

For five days, from 26 to 30 June, athletes, family members, sports coaches, students and **past pupils** experienced the Salesian charism through sport that shapes, nurtures and promotes. The sporting and cultural event promoted



exchange and fraternity among all members of the Salesian educational community in the Northeast.

«On behalf of the Salesian educational communities of Recife, the Salesian Institute of the Sacred Heart is proud and happy to be able to thank all of you, students, educators, family and friends, who have made this 36th Nordestão a real celebration», said the Rector, Fr Francisco Eliano Queiroz, at the end of the event.

According to the Salesian sports coordinator, José Carlos Cunha, each **Nordestão** is a unique experience, saying this with the experience of being involved in this event 11 times.

«*We are happy, because the goal of the Nordestão is not only to reward athletes with medals, but to show the importance of respect, good behaviour and company...*» he said. Student athletes have been training for the Nordestão since January.

But in addition to the physical and technical preparation of the various disciplines, the support of the family is very important for them to be motivated.

For this reason, the family of Júlia Prado, a little 8-year-old swimmer, make sure to accompany her in all the races. Nordestão Salesiano 2023 was no different.

The athlete's parents, Suelen Prado and Alexander da Silva, strongly supported and encouraged their daughter at every stage of the swimming competitions.

«The Nordestão was an incredible experience for my daughter. Despite being so small, she was able to cope with many emotions.

And because we were all together, we were able to keep her anxiety in check at the time of the races...» said Suelen Prado.

For her part, beach volleyball athlete Letícia Fontes dos Santos wanted to recount



some of the moments she experienced at the Nordestão 2023.

«In these five days of racing I learned a lot and gained a lot of wisdom», she said.

The young athlete also had to cope with an injury, while she had to compete in two different categories.

But, like all the athletes who participated in the Nordestão, she was able to count on the support of educators, family members and the school nurse.

«Everyone took great care of me. I got hurt during a game and they helped me with everything I needed.

And in the end I was very happy, because we managed to win gold in the Beach Volleyball tournament under-15», concluded Letícia.

Jamili Vasco da Silva Pereira

Myanmar



Conclusion of the extraordinary visit of Fr Joseph Nguyen Think Phuoc to Myanmar



Anisakan, Myanmar - 17 August 2023

The extraordinary visit of Fr Joseph Nguyen Think Phuoc, Regional Councillor for East Asia-Oceania, to Myanmar, began on 26 July, and ended on 17 August. During these weeks, the Regional Councillor visited all the communities, meeting, talking and listening to the confreres, young people, [past pupils](#), students and members of the Salesian Family, despite the difficult situation in the country. On the evening of 15 August, in particular, the confreres gathered in the Provincial House to listen to his concluding words and message.

Also present for the occasion was Fr Bosco Nyi Nyi, Superior of the Myanmar "Mary Help of Christians" Visitation (MYM), who thanked the Regional Councillor for his closeness and concern towards the province. Afterwards, the young people of the post-novitiate sang a song of thanksgiving. The following day, a feast and conviviality was organized to celebrate Don Bosco's birthday, in the presence of Salesians, FMA, [Past Pupils](#) and young people.

At the end of the concluding Mass, Fr Phuoc assured prayers for Myanmar and the closeness of the Rector Major.

Tanzania



Installation ceremony of the first Superior of the new St Artemides Zatti Province of Tanzania: FR EMILIUS SALEMA



Dar es Salaam, Tanzania - 11 September 2023

The installation ceremony of Fr Emilius Salema as the first Superior of the new Salesian *St Artemides Zatti* Province of Tanzania (TZA) was celebrated on 8 September, in St Peter's Parish in Oysterbay.

The celebration was presided over by Fr Alphonse Dwoudou, Councillor for the Africa Madagascar Region, and was attended by Fr George Tharanyil, Provincial of East Africa (AFE), Fr Richard Gyra, Secretary of the Apostolic Nuncio in Tanzania, Fr Simon Asira Lipuku, former AFE Provincial, Fr Guillermo Basañes, Provincial of Central Africa (AFC) and Fr Vincent

Tembo representing the Zambia-Malawi-Zimbabwe-Namibia (ZMB) Vice-Province.

Also present were numerous priests from the diocese of Dar es Salaam, members of various Congregations, Salesian Cooperators, [Salesian past pupils](#), parents of Salesians, students from Don Bosco Institutes in Tanzania and many others.

In his vision of the TZA Province, Fr Emilius Salema presented three fundamental aspects: «[Salesian Spirituality, our communion with God and fraternal life](#)».

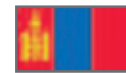


India

Past Pupils from Chhotaudepur come together to renew their commitment with Don Bosco

Chhotaudepur, India – 23 August 2023

The Past Pupils from Chhotaudepur, India, gathered last 19 August at *Don Bosco Chhota* work for a day of conviviality and remembrance. The meeting began in the afternoon, with all present renewing their commitment to Don Bosco. It was a good opportunity to catch up with old friendships, to remember the teachers and Salesians who have accompanied them on their journey, and above all, to see how the institute has prospered over the years. *The Pst Pupils* visited their classrooms, the dormitory, the study hall and the playing fields. At the end of the day, those present took part in a friendly football tournament, in which *Past Pupils from the class of 2016-2017* participated.



Mongolia

General Councillor for the Missions visits Mongolia

(ANS – Ulaanbataar) - 29 August 2023

Fr Alfred Maravilla, General Councillor for Missions, arrived in Mongolia for the Extraordinary Visitation of the Salesian presences there on 21 August.

Diplomatic relations between Mongolia and the Vatican were officially established on 4 April 1992 and the first group of missionaries, three members of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CICM), arrived on 10 July 1992. The first Salesians arrived in Mongolia in 2001. Today there are 11 Salesians working in the country. They have three presences. The first, in the capital of the country, Ulaanbataar, where they run a Technical Training Centre, a kindergarten for children, which is much appreciated by working parents, and an Assistance Centre for children in difficulty. In 2005 they began their second presence in the city of Dar-



khan, where there were no Catholics. Today it has the parish of Mary Help of Christians with 300 baptised members, a "Study Centre" that offers short courses in Korean, Chinese and English to about 30 young people and a daily oratory attended by many young people. And then Shuwuu, an area outside the capital, where poor families from the countryside usually stop for a while waiting to find work in the city. Here, in 2016, the Salesians were invited by the then Apostolic Prefect Wenceslao Padilla CICM to open their third presence. On 15 August 2023, the current Apostolic Prefect, Giorgio Cardinal Marengo IMC, consecrated the parish Church. It has a small community of 75 Catholics. However, many children and young people who follow other religions or no religion attend the Day Care Centre and the Oratory on a daily basis.

"Everything we do in Mongolia is actually first announcement. Through the technical training centre, the Day Care Centre, the Study Centre, the Assistance Centre, the parish, etc. they all have the primary intention of arousing interest in the person of Jesus Christ" stressed the Councillor for the Missions.

After 22 years, the Salesian Family is also gradually developing. The FMA arrived in 2006. 5 Sisters work in their two educational presences. There are currently 26 Salesian Cooperators and numerous past pupils. During his visit, he met Cardinal Marengo in the curia to assure him of the Salesians' commitment to contributing to the building up of the local Church. For his part, the Cardinal expressed his appreciation for the apostolate of the Salesians in the Apostolic Prefecture.

Fr Maravilla concluded his visit on 28 August with a meeting of the Salesian Family in Ulaanbataar. In his address he made reference to Tsuivan, a very common Mongolian pasta dish with meat and vegetables that is cooked in almost every family. «*Let's cook our Tsuivan together with what little wood we have*» he exhorted them. «*The Salesian charism must become truly Mongolian like the Tsuivan. But we can't expect to have a lot of (personal) wood. Let's cook now with enthusiasm and optimism*» he urged his listeners.

Australia



Building the Future with Don Bosco: OzBosco 2023

(ANS – Dromana) – 14 September 2023

Don Bosco strongly believed in the importance of involving young individuals in activities that allowed them to enjoy their life to the fullest. Given that young people possess tremendous energy and zeal, they require an outlet to positively channel all that enthusiasm.

This year's OzBosco witnessed a massive participation of over 50 young individuals in *Don Bosco Camp* in Dromana from various Salesian schools (Dominic College in Tasmania, Salesian College in Sunbury and Saint Joseph's College in Ferntree Gully), Salesian leaders, teachers, Don Bosco Youth Centre and Hostel in Brunswick, Don Bosco Camp Safety Beach, *past pupils*, laity, friends, FMA Sisters, and Salesian confreres from Clifton Hill community and Lysterfield.

The three-day event was packed with va-

rious activities such as fun games, workshops, outdoor adventures, and opportunities for prayer and reflection, which enabled young people to stay connected with their faith and spiritual growth, establish meaningful connections, and find a deeper sense of purpose in their lives.

The event was graced with three guest speakers who shared their experience with young people on self-development and life opportunities to become good and upright citizens.

Promoting volunteering work in the Pacific and the Province for the Salesian Missions was a focus.

Workshops were conducted in groups and it was special for young people as they learned different aspects of life from different facilitators. Culture was focused on exploring the importance of local plants for medicines in Australia and for producing local tools like boomerang, spears and





other equipment used for hunting. Sharing about mental health and awareness enabled young people to learn about the prevalence of mental health issues in society and the importance of seeking help when dealing with mental health challenges. Members of the Salesian Sister's community in Scoresby gave an inspiring input and reflections about the mission in the SPR (South Pacific Region), sharing their experience and the history of the congregation in detail. They encouraged young people to discern their vocations with love, faith and respect.

Isaiah Lahai, a refugee from Africa who came to Australia in search of a new life, also shared his experience with young people as a refugee. He shared the challenges he encountered and how he managed to overcome them through love, kindness and forgiveness. His story was a powerful testament to the resilience of the human spi-



rit and served as an inspiration to all the young people present. Carlos Escobar a past Salesian camp leader dynamically shared his insights into the role of young people in experiencing sharing joy as a foundation in which to create a space to build trust and confidence in peer leadership.

As young people hugged each other to bid farewells, there was a sense of sadness at the thought of leaving newfound friends and returning to their local communities and regular routines.

However, there was also a feeling of gratitude for the opportunity to spend time with such wonderful people and the memories created during the event that they will cherish until they meet again at the next Oz-Bosco.

Source: Australasia



Portugal



"MUSICAL DON BOSCO"

(ANS - Lisbon) - 1 August 2023

"Musical Don Bosco" is an adaptation of the Italian original "Don Bosco, the musical", with texts by Renato Biagioli and Piero Castellacci and music by Alessandro Aliscioni and Achille Oliva.

Clara Martinez, 21 years old, guides the group in warming up and vocalizing. She has a secondary course in singing at the Conservatory, did competition dancing for several years, was part of the children's choir at the University of Lisbon, has a jazz band, is studying Communication Sciences, but remains very focused on dance and singing classes, and also gives singing lessons. When auditions for the musical opened, she signed up.

Ana de Morais, or Bibi, the family name by which she is better known, takes notes. Adjustments to the choreography, props on stage, wardrobe, and gives indications for the placement of voices. Dance and Theater Teacher, she is responsible for the artistic direction.

There are about 90 minutes to tell the story of the founder of the Salesian work, "Father and Master of Youth", and patron of WYD Lisbon 2023. The story of a priest who dedicated his life to orphaned and disadvantaged young people, from the dream he had as a child until it came to fruition in the form of the Salesian Family. «When we learned that WYD would be held in Portugal, it was natural to include this



musical in our proposals for the Youth Festival», says Luís Carlos Peleira, a teacher at the Salesian Music Center in Lisbon. «Don Bosco is one of the patrons of WYD and this is our tribute».

There will be 31 actors on stage. They are students of the Musical Theater at *Musiscentro* de Lisboa, former students and young people who auditioned, with experience in dance, singing and theater. Also participating in these performances are 11 dancers from the *Ana Mangericão* Dance School. The cast also has the special participation of actress Maria Curado Ribeiro, granddaughter of Curado Ribeiro and daughter of Rita Curado Ribeiro, both theater, film and television actors.

Paulo Peleira is 19 years old, he has been

participating in all the presentations of the Musical Theatre of Salesianos in Lisbon for ten years. He is the son of Ana de Morais and Luís Carlos Peleira and is a former student. He attends Dance and Musical Theater classes, and music training, harmony and electric bass classes at the *Musiscentro*. Paul grew up with the Salesian charism around him.

Carolina Berlin already has a lot of experience in *Musiscentro* performances. In this musical, she plays the role of Marguerite Occhiena, Mother of Don Bosco and maternal figure for the young people welcomed by him at the Oratory in Valdocco. She is 26 years old, practically the age that Mãe Margarida was when she became a widow. «Being in a situation of poverty, having to take care of three children, an elderly and very sick mother-in-law and managing everything with kindness, with joy, with toughness but firmness».

«I don't think I could ever do it». Therefore, Carolina says she is an inspiration. «Later, she chose to help Don Bosco in his work. When she could let others take care of her, she chose to take care of hundreds of children. Suffering was not alien to her, weariness was not alien to her, poverty was not alien to her. And she knew the importance of doing what you have to do», she summarizes.

João Baptista, 33, will play the protagonist, St. John Bosco. He was a student at the *Musiscentro* de Lisboa and has already taken

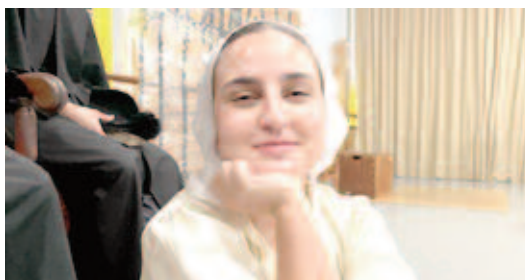
part in other musicals presented by the school. João has to manage all his time rigorously: the young doctor divides these days between fatherhood – he was a father about a year ago – work and rehearsals. «*But it's because I like it*», he says with a smile.

«*I have already commented on this in rehearsals – he explains. I think we should see this as an important mission. We live in very complicated times, when everything we see is very cruel, very difficult, and it's hard to find things that give us hope*». That's why he believes everyone should watch this musical. «*People need to see love, they need love*», he stresses.

For him, Don Bosco was «*first of all a man of faith. He was a man of love, a kind man, very stubborn, very persistent. It was a godsend*». John recalls the impression of the trip he made a few years ago to the places of Don Bosco in Turin. «*It was an unforgettable experience to enter that first oratory*».

Clara believes that the public will leave the auditorium «*with material to think about*». «*This can be a musical, very cute, very lively, that entertains, but the message remains current: you can always fight for the good, and it doesn't take much. That everyone can come together for the greater good*».

For Carolina, the story «*is told in a very entertaining way too*». «*I think this musical translates what youth is, and the*



way we want to transmit our faith and the lives of saints and patrons, something that is not very explored in the Journeys», she says.

Clara, Paulo and João will participate for the first time in a World Youth Day. Clara hopes to be able to participate in all the events that her rehearsal and performance schedule allows. Paulo wants to participate, at least, in the catecheses during the morning and in the main events of the weekend. Carolina participated in WYD in Kraków in 2016. «*It actually changed my life. I was very asleep in my faith, and it was something that woke me up*». In Lisbon, she wants to «*live*» Parque do Perdão and visit the Vocations Fair. «*I hope to be able to enjoy the mornings and walk around the city of Lisbon and experience the Journey*

like any other pilgrim».

For Carolina, as the 1st of August approaches, anxiety and enthusiasm increase and not even the eight hours of work and the two hours of daily rehearsal let her down. «*The body refuses to get tired*», she explains. «*All this happens because of him. [Don Bosco] never got tired, we won't get tired either*».

The scale and importance of the event may cause extra nervousness in the young cast. «*Now none, I feel a lot of responsibility. I know I will. It's part of it*», says João.

«*I'm always nervous, even in rehearsals*», confesses Paulo. «*It's normal, it means that the actor is prepared, at least for me, that means it will go well*».

«*We all did a good job and we're excited to share this story*», says Carolina.

Luís Carlos adds: «*There will be young people watching a show presented by other young people. I think it will be a success and very rewarding for those who had the opportunity to prepare it*».

Clara concludes: «*It's not every day that you see a group of young Portuguese people putting on a show of this scale, with this level of dedication and passion, with this message. It is much bigger than us, than each of these little artists*».

«*It will go well*», Bibi guarantees. «*It always runs well. Don Bosco always helps*».

Source: WYD DON BOSCO 23

Portugal



The Press Conference of the Salesian Family at WYD: Salesians continue to bet on young people

(ANS - Lisbon) - 5 August 2023

On Friday 4 August, at 4pm, at the Salesian Headquarters in Lisbon, in auditorium 6, a Press Conference was held for journalists from Salesian communication realities, in the presence of the Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB), Fr Ángel Fernández Artime; of the Mother General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA), Mother Chiara Cazzuola; and of the General Councillors for Youth Ministry (PG) SDB and FMA, respectively Fr Miguel Angel García Morcuende and Sr Runita Galve Borja.

At the opening, all the guests were asked to say a few words about WYD Lisbon 2023 and their impressions of the young people of the Salesian Youth Movement (SYM) at this event.

«We are living a beautiful, extraordinary moment... Everything is very well prepared, with a great effort», said Fr Á.F. Artime on the occasion. «As for our youth, whom I have greatly appreciated on SYM Day, here in Lisbon and in Estoril, I see them very Salesian, Christian, committed: capable of moving quickly from dance, song, celebration, to the absolute and impressive silence of adoration. My dream is that we will be able to make all this mature again, not only here where they are now, but also in the place where they will return and stay in the coming years».

For her part, Mother Chiara Cazzuola herself also affirmed that she was impressed by the level of Salesian spirituality of the young people manifested during the SYM Day.

«The atmosphere we experienced cannot be improvised: it is the fruit of devout preparation, and it also confirms us religious,



because it is the fruit of what was created before they arrived here. Now I am praying a lot that these young people can bear fruit in their local realities, and that we can continue to accompany them».

«The young people of Salesian Youth Movement are not young people without problems», Fr García Morcuende further

testified. «But when they are motivated, they are capable of overcoming any obstacle. And again, it is important to emphasize that they are young people who are part of the Church, and when I happened to talk to other religious or priests from other realities, they immediately recognize that the young people of the Salesians are a living, active and vibrant force. It is important to emphasize this, because in ordinary reality these young people risk falling into anonymity».

The first round of responses ended with the intervention of Sr Galve Borja: «A great joy for me in this WYD was to find young people that I had known before, some of whom had become priests or nuns, others who had matured... All this gave me proof that the Salesian Youth Movement is a reality that prepares one to take on responsibilities, to live fully. And another thing I love is that our SYM is opening up to be an increasingly open and welcoming movement, where everyone can feel at home».

Later, when asked about the world social reality and the great problems that have marked recent years - from pandemic to wars, from migrations to terrorism, from the exploitation of poor countries to the destruction of Creation - the Rector Major pointed to the young people, that they are capable of offering renewed energy giving new hope and a confident look at the future. «When we are close to young people, that is when the Salesian miracle of sympathy, of welcoming, of leading young people to acts of heroism takes place», he remarked, recalling the model of sacrifice of Akash Bashir, the Salesian past pupil who gave his life in Pakistan to prevent an

attacker from carrying out a massacre in a church.

«Who knows that, instead of being absorbed by this world, by the current status quo, will it not be the young people who will put their faces against these situations that are not acceptable. I believe so much in this ability of young people, and of our young people certainly, to do» concluded the Rector Major.

On the relationship between young people and spirituality, Mother Chiara Cazzuola emphasized the importance of accompaniment, reiterating that young people are interested in faith and discovering the deep

meaning of life, but on the part of educators there is a need to be able to adapt languages, processes, ways of acting and thinking. And almost, as if to complete the discussion, the ability to dream, to be creative and be proactive, was the crux of the sharing by Fr García Morcuende, when asked about the approaching bicentenary of Don Bosco's Nine Years' Dream. The SDB's Youth Ministry Councillor specified, in fact, that only by dreaming together with young people it is possible to accompany an adolescent in his growth.

After Sr Galve Borja offered a recommendation on silence as a useful practice to be able to listen amidst a thousand distrac-

tions, «*the infinite and personal love that God has for each one of us*», both Mother Chiara Cazzuola and Fr Á.F. Artime confirmed to the audience in the auditorium, on the ability the Salesian Family to reach out to young people, even beyond generational differences and technological distances, drawing primarily on the resources of the charisma and the missionary drive, true to the heirs of Don Bosco.

Concluding, the Rector Major told emphatically to the journalists: «*Our young people, with their own style, their Salesian way of being, as true missionary disciples of the Lord, are giving flavour to this whole great reality, of this million young people*».



EX ALLIEVI Newsflash

Religious and Social magazine of the World Confederation of Ex-students of Don Bosco

Director and Editor EX ALLIEVI Newsflash

Opera Salesiana Teresa Gerini
Via Tiburtina, 994 - 00156 Roma (Italia)
tel. (+39) 06.409.003
Internet: www.exallievi.org

Direction and Editorial Coordination

Pierluigi Lazzarini
pierluigi.2208@tiscali.it

Collaborators of this issue

Don Ángel Fernández Artime SDB, Bryan Magro, Dominic Nguyen Duc Nam SDB, don Rosario Salerno SDB, Padre George Tharaniyl (TJ) SDB, Antonio Pires, Sandra Pistilli, Gianfrancesco Romano, Nisaury Ventura, Paolo Affatato, don Fernando García SDB, P. Giovanni Jairo Gómez SDB, Peter Kovac, don Fernando Miranda, don Joan Lluís Playa SDB, Piero Ramello SDB, Jamili Vasco da Silva Pereira

Photography and Images

Archivio Agenzia ANS, Australasia, WYD DON BOSCO 23, Vatican News, La Fedeltà, Don Bosco Aujourd'hui, Boletín Informativo de La Asociación de Exalumnos SDB, Servizio Fotografico Vatican Media, Ispettorica ARS, Exallievi/e e FMA, COPE, Salesiani del Perù, www.missionidonbosco.it

The quarterly magazine (Italian, English, Spanish, French and Portuguese) is available on the official website www.exallievi.org in these deadlines: **EASTER OF RESURRECTION**; **JUNE 24** (birth of former students); **OCTOBER 5** (Blessed A. Marvelli); **DECEMBER 25** (Holy Christmas)

Privacy notice: we process your personal data to the extent of your name, surname and email address, on the basis of Article 6 section 1 f) of the GDPR (legitimate interest in informing the organisation's members on events, news and updates regarding our organisation and the Salesian family), or, as the case may be, on the basis of your consent, exclusively for the purpose determined above, i.e. informing its members on events, news and updates regarding the organisation and the Salesian family via a newsletter. The controller of the personal data is the association Confederazione Mondiale Ex Allievi Don Bosco with its seat at Via Della Pisana III, 00163 Rome, Italy [Via Tiburtina, 994 - 00156 Roma (Italia)], Identification No.: 97066620580, email office@exallievi.org, phone No.+421 915 966 549. Your personal data are not provided to third parties, are not transferred to third countries or international organisations. Your personal data do not make part of an automated decision-making or profiling. The processing of your personal data is not a statutory or contractual requirement, nor a requirement necessary to enter into a contract; you are not obliged to provide us with your personal data. We shall process your personal data until you exercise your right to object to the processing / withdraw your consent. In case you wish to know more about the processing, please do not hesitate to contact us. If you do not wish to receive our newsletters you are entitled, at any time, without any conditions or costs, to object to the processing / withdraw your consent, by sending an email to office@exallievi.org

General House

Salesian headquarters
Via Marsala, 42 - 00185 Roma (Italia)
tel. (+39) 06.656.121 Centralino
Fax (+39) 06.656.12.556
Internet: www.sdb.org
E-mail: rmg@sdb.org

NUMBER OF OUR ACCOUNTS

Name: Confederation of Past Pupils of Don Bosco
Bank: Lombard Bank Malta p.l.c.
Address: Balzan, Malta
IBAN: MT 08 LBMA 0500 0000 0000 0144 0520 986
SWIFT Code: LBMAMTMT
Bank Account Number: 01440520986

Translations

Ag. ANS - Sandra Pistilli

Ag. ANS - Nisaury Ventura

Ag. ANS - Don Rosario Salerno

Ag. ANS - Nisaury Ventura



ITALIAN EDITION



SPANISH EDITION



FRENCH EDITION



PORTUGUESE EDITION