



Designed by Huyton Cooperators



**SALESIAN COOPERATORS
UK PROVINCE NEWSLETTER
CHRISTMAS 2009**



Lay Salesian Cooperators live out the commitment
and the Salesian spirit in their ordinary
circumstances of life and work.

The Beginning Experience

Vera asked me to talk a bit about “what I do” believing you might like to know. This came about because I had included her in my huge prayer request for the autumn Weekend at the Friars in Aylesford, Kent. Thank you to all who prayed for us. Everything went very well indeed owing to God’s grace begged down by the intercession of so many.

The Beginning Experience is a world wide ministry primarily for people whose marriage has ended through death, divorce or separation and also for the children of such a loss. The Vision, therefore, is that these people will work through their grief, be healed, transformed and free again to love, themselves, others and God.

The Ministry was started in America in the mid 1970s by Sr Josephine Stewart and Jo Lamia and came to England about 10 years later. Teams are based in a diocese by permission of the local bishop; the program however is suited and open to all faiths. Globally speaking we are Region 20, i.e. England and Wales, Scotland and all of Ireland. There is also a Young People Beginning Experience as well as Beyond BE and Alumni, Area meetings, Regional Conferences and International Conventions.

I made my first Weekend following the death of my husband and was invited to join the Kent Team. This enabled me to go into the deeper issues involved in the grieving process while at the same time sharing my experiences in a safe and confidential setting with new participants at subsequent Weekends who in turn may join the Team thereby maintaining it.

We usually hold two Weekends a year in a local Retreat Centre have monthly meetings for follow up and Team training and raise our own funds as well as avail of a reflective time for personal growth.

Usually Team members become good friends and occasionally do fun things together. For me it has been a continuing journey from confusion and grief into healing and light and I am very grateful.

*Ruth T. Kamalagharan (Kent Team President)
(Co-operator Streatham Centre)*

PRAYER INTENTIONS

Please keep the following Cooperators who have recently died, in your prayers: John Owens, Irene Carr and Sybil Dash.



Congratulations to our recent enrolments within the Bermondsey group. Sr. Kathleen Taylor received the promise of Elaine Holland.

Important Salesian Anniversaries



The Salesians are celebrating a year dedicated to Blessed Michael Rua, the first successor of Don Bosco. Don Rua died on 6 April 1910. This celebration will be the main theme of our Salesian Family Day on 23 January 2010. On the occasion of his beatification in 1972 Pope Paul VI called Michael Rua “the most faithful son of Don Bosco”. On Sunday 18 December 1859 Don Bosco and seventeen young men, including Michael Rua, made their profession of Salesians. So the Salesian Congregation came into existence. On 18th December 2009 we celebrate our 150th Birthday!



Retreat 2009



Nothing could be more rewarding than a week-end at Brettagh in all its autumnal beauty, except the arrival of Salesian cooperators, the warm welcome for all by the Sisters and the heart of the retreat, the spirituality provided by Bernard Parkes.

We had a very diverse age range, from Eveline, age six months, to those of us a few decades older and Eveline was a great example to us all!

The theme was woven around the Salesian Logo, how it was chosen, the importance of logos and its significance today for the Salesian family. Fr. Bernard gave four excellent talks that culminated in Sunday mass where a group of young people carried brightly coloured flags, showing the logo and then did an amazing dance routine.

We had a visit and an excellent talk from Sr. Kathleen F.M.A. who is visiting from Rome. She was very encouraging and practical.

Saturday night was Social Night and I will say only that, as usual, laughter, song, dancing and sweet wine were in abundance. X factor eat your heart out!

Sunday was a time of goodbyes, after mass and a truly delicious lunch. Until we meet again.

Eleanor (Bollington Cooperators)

Over time other parishioners have been attracted to “Come and See” and this has resulted in further enrolments: 5 in 1982 and 2 in 1984 by Fr. Michael Power in the Convent Chapel; 2 in 1991 by Fr. Michael Winstanley in Our Lady’s Church on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception; 2 in 1994 in the Convent Chapel (1 by Fr. Peter Dooley; 1 by Fr. John Docherty); 1 in 1997 by Fr. John Corcoran in the Convent Chapel; 6 in 1998 by Fr. Hugh Preston during our Advent Retreat Day, 1 in 2002 by Fr. Dan Donohoe at the Valponasca during a Pilgrimage, 3 in 2006 by Fr. Bernard Parkes in the Convent Chapel. In 2005 we held two special “Come and See” days when parishioners were invited to come along and find out more about the Salesian Family and what it means to be a Salesian Co-operator. Those interested were then invited to come to our monthly meetings and, if they wished, to embark on a period of Formation; this exercise resulted in 3 new Co-operators being enrolled in 2008 by Fr. Bernard in the Mornese Centre and 1 by Fr. Kieran in the local Nursing Home. (A CD of our Recruitment Days was prepared for future use by us and for other Centres.)

We now have a total of 35 members with 2 in Formation. We have been fortunate in having received very good Formation and ongoing Formation: from our SDB and FMA Animators, our Advent Retreat Days and the Co-operators Annual Retreat. In our early years, when the Salesian Provincial House was based in Cowley, we were able to have various Salesian priests come to our meetings. We have also been privileged to receive visits from the Mother Generals, from SDB and FMA Provincials, Co-operator representatives on the World Council, Provincial Delegates (SDB, FMA and Co-operator). Their input has always been spiritually uplifting, and inspiring, leaving us with much food for thought – as well as a challenge.

A variety of guest speakers have been welcomed to our meetings, including SDBs, visiting Sisters and Salesian Volunteers. It has been encouraging to have visits from those who have first-hand experience of working in some of the mission territories we have supported with our fund raising. These guests have always been an inspiration to us.

Cowley Co-operators owe a great debt of gratitude to Sr. Teresa for that first invitation; to our Parish Clergy and the numerous other Salesian Priests and Sisters who, over the past thirty years, have all enriched our lives helping us to grow in our personal faith journey towards that ‘call to holiness’ which is extended to all baptised Christians; to reach out to others in Faith, in the spirit of Don Bosco, to bring Love, Peace, Joy and Hope to all those with whom we come into contact, especially the young. That is our Salesian Vocation.

Cowley Co-operators.

SALESIAN CO-OPERATORS, COWLEY

24th OCTOBER 1979 – 24th OCTOBER 2009

On Saturday, 24th October 2009 Cowley Co-operators celebrated, with Thanksgiving, their 30th Anniversary with an afternoon gathering in the Mornese Centre (in the grounds of Elmthorpe Convent). We were privileged to have Sr. Pauline Clark (Provincial), Sr. Kathleen Taylor (member of the General Council), Fr. Bernard Parkes, Sr. Agnes McGuinness, Sisters from Battersea and Streatham, Co-operators from Chertsey, Henley and Liverpool, as well as fellow parishioners join us for this very happy occasion.

The afternoon commenced at 2.30pm with tea, coffee, juice provided. Christina Baker, our Coordinator, gave a warm welcome to all and this was followed by a Prayer moment led by Sr. Teresa, Sr. Linda and Sr. Maria. Sr. Kathleen then addressed the gathering which was followed by a History of the Cowley Co-operators presented by Bob and Jean, Dermot and Sheila. Light refreshments were then served before we all left for the 5.30pm vigil Mass at Our Lady Help of Christians Church. This was a special Mass of Thanksgiving concelebrated by Fr. Kieran Anderson (PP), Fr. John Ashton (Assistant), Fr. Bernard Parkes as well as Fr. Jim Collins (who happened to be in Cowley that weekend). The homily was given by Fr. Bernard. Co-operators were closely involved in the Mass with Readings, Bidding Prayers, Offertory Procession, Eucharistic Ministers and Music. During the Offertory Procession a cheque for £1,200 was presented to Fr. Kieran for our new Parish Centre. This represented the proceeds of Co-operators fund raising: five monthly Cake Sales (March-July), plus a Charity Stall held in the local shopping centre.

Cowley Co-operators owe their existence to Sr. Teresa who responded to the wish expressed by Mother Marinella Castagno in 1978 that in all their houses the Sisters would start or promote a Centre of the Association of the Salesian Co-operators, and with encouragement from Fr. Mario Cogliandro and Fr. John Docherty to go ahead with courage, assuring them of Don Bosco's blessing. After prayer and discussion with Sr. Helen Carey, Sr. Teresa invited parents who had been actively involved with a "Harvest Helpers" group (run by Sr. Helen and Sr. Sarah for children from Our Lady's School), together with friends and benefactors in neighbouring parishes, to a meeting at 'Elmthorpe' to learn about the vocation of a Salesian Co-operator – to "Come and See".

After initial meetings with Sr. Teresa we 'liked what we saw and experienced' and in September 1978 Sr. Teresa invited us to embark on a period of Formation led by Sr. Teresa and Fr. Walter Fairclough (from the Provincial House in Cowley) who offered Mass for us each evening.

On 24th October 1979, during a special Mass in Elmthorpe Convent Chapel, 26 Co-operators were enrolled. On that occasion we became a vital part of the Salesian Family and the Cowley Co-operators Centre was established. When Fr. Fairclough moved in 1980 Fr. Michael Power took over as our SDB Delegate until 1985, when the Provincial House closed. Over time, at our monthly meetings, a study was made of the Regulations for Apostolic Life (RAL), now modified and renamed Project of Apostolic Life (PAL). We learnt about the lives of Don Bosco, St. Francis de Sales, Mary Mazzarello, and Dominic Savio, their spirituality and charism as well as Don Bosco's Preventive System. We also used Fr. Enzo Bianco's book "A Practical Way of Life" to raise our awareness of what it really means to be a Co-operator, implementing Salesian principles in our everyday life.

A Message from Sr. Agnes

It doesn't seem possible that it is "that time of the year" when we are looking towards the Christmas Edition of our Newsletter. Time has just flown since we received the Summer Edition !! Looking at it now, I see that the article "FROM YOUR DELEGATES" has been attributed to me, but I'm sure, having read it, you will realise that this is a mistake and that it was in fact written by Fr. Bernard.

In his article he states that I will be trying to assist those who are responsible for initial formation in the centres, and try to provide materials to help you with this all important task. It would be wonderful if we could come up with a programme that would reflect our new Project of Apostolic Life, and meet the needs of our Province. I have spent a lot of time reading around the subject and have tried to find out how the various centres approach Initial Formation. I will be in touch with the centres soon, trying to find out who is responsible in each centre, and how we can work together to standardise the formation in the Province, while at the same time, allowing each group to retain their own unique identity.

Formation is, as you know, a life long process for each one of us. It is the work of God in our lives, and we are continually being formed by God. We respond to the process, but it is God who forms us. One co-operator recently suggested that it would be a good idea to look back at our own Initial Formation, and renew our response to the Call of God which we each received, and responded to, when we first became members of our wonderful Salesian Family.

By the time you are reading this, we will be into the beautiful season of Advent, with all the rich liturgical scripture passages. My prayer for each one of you is taken from the Advent reading
1 Thess.5: 23-24

"May the God who gives us peace make you completely His, and keep your whole being, spirit, soul and body, free from all fault at the coming of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. He who calls you will do it, for He is faithful." Please remember me in your prayers.

Sr. Agnes

Our stay in Bethlehem was at the St Vincent Guest House, an establishment which had its roots with a small community of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul. This Community was based next door to the Guest House and this proximity was to prove to be our introduction to the “Bethlehem Creche” – an orphanage. The crèche looks after over 50 babies and children up to the age of six years. The children, Jews, Christians and Muslims alike are literally delivered to the door of the orphanage, usually by the police. Whilst we were there a little 2 week old was delivered to the front door in a cardboard box . Over the course of our stay in Bethlehem a very firm bond was forged between the pilgrims in the |Group and the babies and children. We were allowed to visit to play with and feed the children . What a privilege. I am convinced that it was no coincidence that we came across this orphanage towards the latter part of our pilgrimage journey. I felt most strongly that Jesus was saying.....”You have walked in my footsteps to learn more about what I did for **YOU**.....now what are **YOU** going to do for these little ones of mine” ?

The Group responded most positively to that (hidden) call. On our return home many have written to the Sisters and others have commenced fund raising initiatives of their own. I find it so special that at the end of seeking to follow in the footsteps of Jesus we were given this opportunity to respond to His call to “love your neighbour” in a very tangible way. If anyone feels that they would like to associate themselves with our efforts in Chertsey – we are going to donate a Christmas Gift to the “Babes of Bethlehem” - please contact me. Ken Greaney, 24 Paddocks Way, CHERTSEY, Surrey. KT16 8HP Phone 01932564649. Email kenbargreaney@aol.com.

Ken Greaney Coordinator

THE DON BOSCO GROUP 2009.....IN THE HOLYLAND !

On October 9th a group of 14 Chertsey Cooperators plus 14 parishioners set out on an eight day pilgrimage to the Holyland. The "Don Bosco Group 2009" was led by Fr Hugh Preston SDB. We stayed two nights at Nazareth, two nights in Jerusalem and three nights in Bethlehem. For all of us it proved to be a most beautiful and enriching experience as we visited so many of the holy sites. Holy Mass was celebrated on every one of the eight days in locations which included the Church of the Annunciation (my favourite), the Church of the Beatitudes, the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre and the Church of the Nativity

Our dedicated coach proudly displayed our Pilgrimage Identifier – "DON BOSCO GROUP" – and this was to prompt not a few smiling faces who approached us to say that they knew Don Bosco and his Salesians. Whilst in Jerusalem we visited the Salesian Monastery Ratisbonne where Fr Francis Preston SDB is the Rector. Fr Francis is well known by many in the Holyland as a result of preaching retreats, giving days of recollections etc. His face is so well known in fact that on several occasions Fr Hugh was enthusiastically embraced by folk whom he had never seen in his life before (mainly nuns !) because they thought he was Fr Francis. I did notice that he was more than happy to receive the hugs first BEFORE he owned up to being an imposter ! Mind you there were a few others who must have thought they were seeing double when Fr Francis joined his brother in concelebration of our Mass in Bethany.



A Celebration Mass 50 years of the Salesian Sisters working in Gillmoss and Croxteth

On 26th September 2009, a celebratory Mass was held at Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Parish Church.

Almost 500 people, including sisters from the province, past pupils, parents, teachers, co-operators, all gathered to share in the Jubilee Mass of

Mary Help of Christians, which was concelebrated by 23 Salesian priests, and priests from the diocese who had served in the parish. There was a great involvement and sharing of gifts by all the community. The primary school began with an introduction, a summary of the history of the last 50 years. The Students from St John Bosco provided the music and choir, and a group of dancers did a reflective liturgical dance after communion. During the Mass, the sisters had the opportunity to sing together.

Fr David O'Malley who preached at the Jubilee celebrations said, What we build in love lasts in the hearts of people because God is Love.

You could tell there was a great love in the hearts of all the people for the Salesian Sisters, shown on this special Jubilee Day.

After the Mass, there was refreshments and a buffet in the school hall. There was a real Salesian joy, time to share memories and to look back and reminisce. Many people had the chance to look at some photographs from the past years.

Two Salesian Co-operators receive a Special Medal

At the Jubilee Mass for the Salesian Sisters, celebrating 50 years of working with the young, in Gillmoss and Croxteth, two of the Salesian Co-operators from the Liverpool Gillmoss Group, Marie Shutt and Phyllis Cooke were presented with medals by the Provincial Fr Michael Winstanley from the Rector Major Fr Pascal Chavez for their long service.

Both Marie and Phyllis have worked in the Croxteth and Gillmoss area in the Spirit of Don Bosco for many years, showing great zeal and joy in serving the Lord with gladness, and in living out their Salesian vocation.



Croxteth Cooperators



REFLECTION FOR ADVENT

We have all experienced times of waiting in our lives. For a moment, let us think about what it feels like to wait. There may be the feeling of great excitement, waiting for the arrival of a new baby in the family, a feeling of nervousness of waiting for results from exams, waiting for results from tests at the hospital, feelings of anxiety, waiting for an operation etc. not knowing what may be happening.

Advent is a time when we are preparing, and waiting, getting ready for the coming of Jesus into our hearts. *What are our feelings? What are we waiting for? What are we expecting?*

How do we get ready for someone who is coming to see us? We like to have some time to clean, time to prepare ourselves, time to prepare our homes and our hearts.



If we are waiting to make a home for Jesus in our hearts, *How can we prepare?*

We can get ready by preparing our hearts, spending time in prayer, reflecting on what it is that is really important in our life, what is it that I am called upon to do, in my family, in my work, in my community, in my parish.

It is only then, after preparation that we will find peace, love and joy in Jesus, and share it with each other this Advent and Christmas.

*Tracey McConnell
(Salesian Cooperator, Croxteth)*