

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SALESIAN FAMILY

# DON BOSCO TODAY

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## Editorial



On the front cover of this issue of *Don Bosco Today* we see our recently appointed Cardinal Zen and our Rector Major, Fr Pascal Chávez. They stand on either side of a new statue of Don Bosco. The statue is but a sculptor's image of a saint. As with all statues, it might not appeal to some people, it may not capture their image of the saint.

However I find this composite picture deeply symbolic. For me, the two men do indeed capture the spirit of Don Bosco. Each, in their impressive ways, is for us Don Bosco. Cardinal Zen is the voice of the Chinese Catholics, a vast multitude who live in very difficult religious and political circumstances. He expresses the hopes and aspirations of so many young people in China. Fr Pascal Chávez is Don Bosco today for the many thousands in the Salesian Family and beyond, who, having been moved by the life of Don Bosco, find in Fr Chávez their inspiration and their guide. His wonderful smile, his incredible energy, his wise words, all of these speak to us of Don Bosco. I hope you find the articles on Cardinal Zen and Fr Chávez interesting.

While thanking God for the leadership provided by people such as these two men, I am also conscious that the great good they do would not be possible without the support of so many like-minded people whose generosity facilitates their work. I would like to acknowledge the thousands of people who support our Salesian work with their prayers and with their donations. We try to write and personally thank every individual who sends donations, but I am conscious that there are some who support us with direct debit payments, and these do not receive a thank-you each time their donation comes into the bank. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their constant generosity.



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Editor

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# Meeting Fr Chávez



The 23rd May 2006 was a beautiful spring day with typical English sunny weather. Members of the Salesian Family, from all over the North of England and Scotland, had gathered to meet the Rector Major of the Salesians, Fr Pascual Chávez, at Thornleigh, Bolton. Before he spoke to everyone he blessed a new crucifix which had recently been painted by Fr Albert Carette SDB, a young 86 year-old Salesian priest. The crucifix was to replace the more traditional cross in the School Assembly Hall. Fr Chávez also agreed to launch the English edition of the life of Mamma Margaret presented to him by Mrs Joan Rankin, manager of Don Bosco Publications. Mrs Kathleen Pearce, author of our many books for children, also presented him with a copy of her latest book, *Rosie and Katie Go to Mass*.

Fr Chávez spoke to the Salesian Family gathering as follows:

This year is the 150th anniversary of the death of Mamma Margaret, mother of Don Bosco and in a very special way mother of his boys; I invite you to reflect on *Family*, that most important institution for any individual, for society and for the Church. Nowadays the family is

under pressure from social and cultural factors which may undermine its stability. In some countries it is also put at risk by legislation which attacks its natural structure: the union between a man and a woman based on their indissoluble marriage agreement. Let's begin with the family of Nazareth, which continues to be the model for every family, from the time when the Son of God became incarnate and shared in our human history, coming into a family where he matured as man and as God. The Holy Family tells us so much about *family*.

I want to speak to you about that significant episode when, at twelve years of age, **Jesus was found in the Temple in Nazareth**. This passage provides a link between the infancy narratives in the Gospels and the public life of Jesus, just as adolescence comes between childhood and adulthood. The first characteristic of the adolescent is that you are no longer a child but not yet an adult. It is not a comfortable time for any young man or woman; certainly not for their parents. The most important word in this gospel story is the word - **with**: Jesus faces the most important moments of his religious and personal life **with** his parents. Jesus has to do the will of the Father; it is a time when he is searching for his own life plan, a period to be faced and resolved. For all young people it remains a period to be faced and resolved. Those who do not do so remain adolescents, unstable for the rest of their life. It can also be a time of joyful discovery and of conscious acceptance of reality. If anything, the crisis is felt by the parents who struggle to let go and who suffer because, too often, they don't know how to help their youngster. The question of our own vocation remains the first that we have to face, alone.



There's a very special lesson in Luke's Gospel; the conversation between Jesus and his parents is all **questions**: *My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you.* To which Jesus replies *Why? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?* The secret of education, the way Jesus teaches us, consists in using plenty of **question marks**, but hardly any **exclamation marks**. Unfortunately so often we as parents, teachers and pastors, often do the opposite. Even Mary struggles to understand. Separation is always a struggle. Adolescent sons and daughters need to be looked at with affectionate understanding and listened to seriously. These days a great deal of attention is paid to openness: listening, watching, trying to understand, picking up on unspoken messages, reading between the lines. We need to talk with children, not at them. Joseph and Mary didn't give up on Jesus: we shouldn't drop out of our children's lives; even when they leave us. We need to be present with them and protect them. If the occasion arises it's good to give them a hug: they will make a fuss, but they like it. They have few needs but these are important:

- **Companionship** - since they often feel lonely.
- **things to do** - because they easily get bored.
- **security** - since they are afraid of an unknown world which they still have to understand.
- **conversation** - because there are so many things they don't know.

Education too, ought to be **with** the children, trying to get them involved: *Jesus went down with them then and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority.*

So what can we do for adolescents?

- **Respect them.** A calm and respectful approach is needed. Adolescents will be able to acquire self-respect if they feel appreciated. They need to have some degree of self-sufficiency and autonomy. Respect has to be real; they will see through pretence. It is shown in an increase in trust and in giving greater responsibility. Give adolescents jobs to do, even important ones. Give them the responsibility of managing the money they need; acknowledge their right to choose their own friends, pastimes, sports, and social activities, these are all excellent ways.
- **Encourage them.** Adolescents are poor; their only possessions are their dreams, which some people enjoy trampling on. Let them see your pleasure and your joy when they do something worthwhile: at this age, praise strengthens the ties of affection.
- **Let them see your faith.** Many adolescents give up the faith as a relic of childhood: it is up to the parents to show them that for adults it can be strength.
- **Forgive them.** It is always good to leave the door open. Failure is their daily bread. They need to learn from their parents, who should never forget that they too were once adolescents.

After the Rector Major had spoken, it was time for a picnic lunch on the lawn and games for the younger people. The fine weather helped make the atmosphere so special. The Rector Major joined the young people in their activities and seemed to be as joyful as they were. The day ended with a Mass in the school chapel, the sanctuary being crowded with a legion of enthusiastic servers from St James' parish in Bootle. A truly memorable day!



# The Abuse of Drink

Don Bosco wandered the streets of Turin during his early years as a priest. He found young people working on building sites, in sweat shops and road construction. Many of them were exploited and abused by unscrupulous managers and over-charged for food and filthy accommodation. Young people were degraded and without respect for themselves. Like a good parent and educator Don Bosco resolved to bring practical help in the form of safety, education and spiritual awareness. He used a three point plan of **reason, religion and kindness** as a rescue package for the youth of Turin.

If Don Bosco walked the streets of some of our cities today, what would he see? Sadly he would find the same level of exploitation of young people; he would also see the same degradation and lack of respect. Many of our town centres have become a focal point for young people, drawn together by cheap alcohol and the need to escape the stress of life at home. The Chief Constable, in my own home town of Leicester, recently said, *There is a profit-driven competitiveness around alcohol, and one of its consequences is young people becoming victims.* Just as the employers of Turin exploited young people in Don Bosco's time, so the entertainment business in the UK is exploiting young people today, leading them into a binge-drinking culture. As in Don Bosco's time, much of this is happening beyond the influence of parents and caring adults.

Alcohol is so much part of our society that we may underestimate its impact on the lives of young people. It is only when we read about an eleven-year-old, who became pregnant after a binge-drinking session, that we realise that things are serious. What we do not read about are the children scarred by drunken domestic violence and the ones who are laying down a habit of drinking that will eventually destroy their health and mental stability. If Don Bosco

were walking through the streets of our cities today he would see the harm being done to young people whom he called, the *most precious and most vulnerable part of society.*

The question is, can Don Bosco's approach of *reason, religion* and *kindness* still work, in meeting the challenge of young people binge-drinking in developed countries? Perhaps *reason, religion* and *kindness* have something to say about how we can manage the issue of youth and alcohol. Perhaps the Salesian preventive approach can help to rescue some young people from the damage that alcohol can bring, to open their lives to new reasons for living and hoping. Maybe reason religion and kindness can bring them to their senses in the way the prodigal son realised that he could return to his father.

*Reason* was the first of Don Bosco's key words in working with young people at risk. How might reason be used in supporting a healthier attitude to alcohol in young people? Some young people may change



their behaviour when they realise that five to nine million children in Europe are living in families damaged by alcohol and 10,000 deaths occur to bystanders or passengers from drink-drivers each year. These are awful statistics that hide a tidal wave of suffering among young people. However, such statistics have a limited impact on young people's choices, the power of the peer group and the persuasiveness of advertising targeted directly at teenagers is far too strong. Education, on its own, is unlikely to make an impact on young people's choices. The effects of alcohol that are closer to a young person's experience are more likely to provide good reasons for better choices: your breath smells, you look awful, you get into inappropriate relationships, you get headaches, you may be sick or incontinent, the day after a binge-drinking session may be lost to friendship, fun, family and work. Parents and other adults also need to set an example in their own reasonable use of alcohol, in terms of the amount and the setting in which it is used. The UK binge-drinking rate is four times that of Italy, where alcohol is used primarily in family settings and in the context of a meal. Perhaps, as adults, we may at times have encouraged, by our example, an inappropriate use of alcohol.



Reasonable use of alcohol, modelled by respected adults, is likely to have the most effect on youth drinking. However, a reasoned approach to protect young people who are most vulnerable, would also suggest that some controls and sanctions be placed on the advertising and sale of alcohol to young people. The use of alcohol as a symbol of belonging, leisure and success, by advertising makes it a focal point of youth peer groups. In that symbolic role alcohol can easily become a focus for over-indulgence and competitiveness among young women as well as young men. Just as Don Bosco campaigned to establish unions and standards among employers of the young, perhaps he would also be campaigning for a more responsible drinks industry today.

Don Bosco was not just a social worker but also a spiritual leader. The second part of his response to exploitation of the young was *religion*. Don Bosco often energised young prisoners, by reminding them that they are precious and children of God. This passion for the dignity of each young person and a huge belief in their goodness is a vital part of rescuing young lives, or *saving souls* as Don Bosco called it. Religion and spirituality awaken a deep sense of dignity in young people, that can rescue them from the emptiness that often leads to over-indulgence. A Salesian friend, commenting on the degrading scenes of late night drinking, felt that there was a lack of shame in the young in being sick, lying in the gutter or being destructive of places and people. If that is true then it points to a deeper thirst for meaning and a sense of personal worth.





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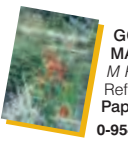
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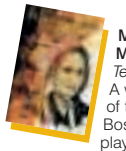


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# East Timor Welcome

**East Timor Update**  
**DILI: 30th April 2006**

**Amidst fear and flight and hope, East Timor's first Cooperators make their promises.**

Early in the morning, at Mary Help of Christians Parish Church, three couples made their promises, as Salesian Cooperators, at a Mass presided over by Fr Callejas, Superior of the Vice Province. The moment was an historical one, as it was the first formal promise amongst this group of the Salesian Family in Timor Leste. Timor Leste has had a Salesian presence for 60 years, but no formal Association of Salesian Cooperators until now. The event made history in terms of context, too. News media had already reported on the disturbances associated with a dispute amongst members of the armed forces, essentially the sacking of 591 soldiers, which has led to rioting, a number of deaths and the burning of 100 or more homes in the capital Dili.

The Salesian House had, for several days, been a reception centre for around 5,000 people, many of them families of the parish who have fled their homes in fear of further rioting and burning. In fact it had been the largest gathering of refugees around the city, some had gathered at the airport, several hundred in the US Embassy, others at the police HQ and others again at the FMA community residence and grounds. This is the third time large crowds of people have taken refuge at Don Bosco, Comoro: first in 1999, then in March and again this month.

The witness of our Salesians in all of this has been outstanding, especially when water and food in these circumstances is limited. The Principal of the Don



Bosco Training Centre, Brother Adriano SDB, has had to carry much of the burden of organisation, since most of the priests have been involved around the city in parish duties. A decision had been made to continue to provide normal Masses and services for people at this crucial time. So Brother Adriano organised the logistics with help from NGOs and Embassies. Some 30 people were injured during the shooting and again it was Brother Adriano who organised the transportation to the hospital.

Amidst all of this, the First Promises by three couples, their subsequent sharing of their vocational journey and the later blessing of the Statue of St John Bosco at the entrance to the compound was a moment of hope that helped vanquish fear. They certainly didn't ask for an additional 5,000 guests for the occasion, but perhaps that too was a blessing in disguise!

**DILI: 4th May 2006**

Life in Dili has yet to settle down. Most of the 7,500 or so people in our compound had already left. The government helped them with transport to go to their nearby villages. Only about 1,000 remained because they were still afraid to return to their homes in the city, or because their houses had been burnt and they had no house they could call a home.

However, people started coming in again. Very soon we had 6,000 people who had returned. The city of

# East Timor Welcome

Dili was almost empty as most of the inhabitants had already gone to their native places in the districts. All this because of rumours: some said the army had split between the Westerners and the Easterners, and there was a fear of an imminent shoot-out. Others said the police were against the army, but the police officers we have been able to contact indicated no such antagonism. Others said the leaders of the land have already fled the country. People do not know what to believe.



The Salesians received the refugees with open arms. Some Salesians went looking for food, others for shelter, toilets and medical aid. Several NGO's approached them, asking what they could do to help. The government sent a team of doctors to attend to the sick, and bring in food supplies, water facilities and portable toilets. Embassies also expressed their willingness to help. Outside the city of Dili, things are peaceful.

## COMORO: 28th May 2006

As conditions in Dili and beyond continued to be worrying, two groups of youths and men approached each other in an ugly and hostile confrontation near the Don Bosco compound in Dili. Salesians, Fr Soares, Fr Roque, Bro. Adriano, Sister Ana Freitas and Sister Maria arrived on the scene to calm them down.

The groups were armed with an assortment of weapons: machetes, traditional swords, pieces of iron pipe, spears, crow bars, *pana ambon* (a sharpened 12 cm nail with raffia tail propelled by a sling shot), lengths of iron chain and rocks. It took hours of talk, with both sides initially intent on doing what they planned to do. Even after the talking, the Salesians and the village leaders still had to stay with them for a long time, as the groups did not want to disperse and go home. But in the end, the groups did disperse to their own areas.

Two days earlier peace-keeping forces from Australia, New Zealand, Portugal and Malaysia began arriving in the capital, and were soon deployed. While the entire city was not yet under their control, the airport and road leading to the city had been secured. News reports indicated a lessening in the violence that has resulted in the deaths of more than 20 people and the further torching of homes and businesses.

## COMORO-DILI: 29th May 2006

The procession from the church to Our Lady's grotto a kilometre away and the Mass in honour of Mary Help of Christians went on as scheduled on 24th May. *I praise you for your courage*, Fr. Manuel Fraile, the pastor of the Parish of Mary Help of Christians, told the congregation, *you came in spite of the overcast skies and the happenings around us. In fact, when I consulted some of you earlier this afternoon whether it would be wiser to cancel the procession and Mass at the grotto and have a simple Mass inside the church, you told me to go ahead as scheduled, as you were prepared make a little sacrifice under the rain.*

Not only the procession and Mass went on uneventfully, but also the procession going back to the church, the reception and short programme after the Mass. There was only one problem: Bishop Alberto Ricardo da Silva could not come to celebrate the Mass because he was asked by the President of the Republic to attend a meeting to discuss the worsening situation in the country.

Just the day before, there had been a battle between the regular army and some run-away soldiers at the eastern end of the capital, which resulted in two deaths and several wounded. People panicked and sought refuge in the different convents of religious congregations. The refugees in Comoro, some of which had been staying there since the 28th of April, increased. The burning of some houses, and unclear news of other incidents some kilometres west of the city were reasons enough for people to stay in their refuge.

Some relief came later in the evening when the national radio and television announced the decision of the government, the diplomats and the Church to call in peace keeping forces from New Zealand, Australia, Portugal and Malaysia. The news said the soldiers were already on the way to this troubled country. But still, the refugees at Don Bosco said, *We will not leave Don Bosco until we see the foreign soldiers with our own eyes and the situation under their control.*



## DILI: 31st May 2006

With more than 1,500 troops now in Dili, Australia was keeping a close eye on the very difficult situation, things are calmer elsewhere in the island; the Don Bosco Centre at Comoro has been the setting for a little too much of the action, and the Salesian Sisters too, have been dealing with large numbers of refugees.

Monday was a bad day. The Chief Executive of World Vision is an Australian Baptist minister, Rev Tim Costello. He reports: *Our staff here have been under fire. Their compound had to be evacuated. The very work of getting food and water for some 25,000 refugees in three camps, the Don Bosco camp is one we're going to, and two convents - would be at risk if we had to evacuate, and we now have to make that decision because of the security situation.*

Things took a turn for the worse when World Vision had to evacuate and an Australian contingent of troops were ordered elsewhere at a critical moment. Just minutes after the Australian peacekeepers departed from the Catholic mission of Don Bosco, a gunfight broke out. Two men were shot and wounded.

As Brother Adriano drove the victims to hospital, the vehicle was attacked by a mob throwing stones, and he was hit on the head. On the main road between the airport and the city, pitched battles raged all day. At one point Australians soldiers drove by at great speed in their armoured personnel carriers as a man was dragged from his car and beaten.

## COMORO: 7 June 2006

At 10:30 am, Bishop Alberto Ricardo da Silva of Dili made a surprise visit to the school. From the school, the bishop proceeded to the Don Bosco compound to visit the 15,000 plus refugees. The bishop consoled and encouraged the refugees and took time to talk with them.



# Our New Salesian Cardinal

When the Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez introduced the newly appointed *Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun SDB*, to the community of the Salesian headquarters in Rome, he said, *The Salesian Congregation is proud of this appointment since it is a recognition of the Episcopal ministry carried out by Joseph Zen in the diocese of Hong Kong and a gift for a province which this year is celebrating the centenary of the presence of the Salesians in China.*

The new Cardinal, in his turn, shared how he felt when he learned of his appointment as Cardinal,

*I was confused; but knowing that it was not for me but for China and the Church in China I no longer hesitated.*

He spoke about his family background,

*I was born into a Catholic family, my parents were baptised while they were attending secondary school. My father wanted to become a priest, but the missionary who baptised him said he should get married and send his son to the seminary.*



Cardinal Zen described his father's commitment to educating him in the faith, and the poverty the family suffered during the war. As a result of his father's illness, he had turned to the Salesians in order to pursue his Church studies.

Cardinal Zen recalled, with great enthusiasm, the atmosphere in those school days,

*In spite of the restrictions imposed by the war, there was so much happiness, it seemed like heaven! When we sang and acted on the stage, we forgot our hunger!*

He recalled his studies of theology in Turin,

*The house was poor but we had saints among us, Fr Quadrio, Fr Bertetto, all great Salesians who taught us and gave us good example.*

After a few years, having returned to his Province, he was called to teach philosophy and theology in a seminary on mainland China. It was a great privilege, teaching the seminarians,

*I see my appointment as Cardinal as an honour for the Chinese people and the Church which over the years has patiently maintained the faith.*

The Catholic Patriotic Church (CPA), in China, is a schism from the Catholic Church. The full Roman Catholic Church, in communion with the Pope, does exist in mainland China, although its members are subject to official harassment, and some leaders have been jailed. In mainland China there are about 4 million members of the CPA, and 12 million members of the authentic (underground) Catholic Church, defined as being in communion with the Vatican. However, the two have considerable overlap, and up to 70 percent of the priests in the official church, it is estimated, may have also been reconciled with the Vatican and secretly part of the unofficial church. The Vatican recognizes the validity of Holy Orders and other sacraments, such as the Eucharist, in the CPA because the bishops are episcopal successors of a bishop who received valid orders before the emergence of the schism.

## Milan - 29th May 2006

The Italian magazine for Christian apologetics, *Il Timone* (The Helm) awarded Cardinal Zen the title *Defensor Fidei* (Defender of the Faith). The award carries with it a sum of €10,000 which the Cardinal says will help provide lodging for young people visiting next July, when Hong Kong hosts the Asian World Youth Day events. The title is carefully worded to distinguish itself, no doubt, from the title *Fidei Defensor* which still appears on British-minted coins (with the initials FD) and was first granted by Pope Leo X to King Henry VIII for a book he claimed authorship of, in defence of the Seven Sacraments.

## Hong Kong - 4th June 2006

Many Catholics of Hong Kong were on the streets to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square (4th June 1989 in Peking). The streets of the former British colony were filled with demonstrators in defence of democracy and of freedom: they assembled in Victoria Park with candles,



songs and readings. Cardinal Zen asked Catholics to resist those who do not respect the principle *one country, two systems*<sup>1</sup> and who threaten freedom of expression. The Cardinal said that Hong Kong has experienced *its own 4th June* this year when their hopes for a full democracy in the elections of 2007-2008 were blocked by Peking. In April, the Standing Committee of the Chinese Parliament had blocked every step towards a greater democracy, violating the principle of one country two systems that guaranteed greater autonomy for Hong Kong. The Cardinal said:

*On our 4th June, no blood was shed, nor did they shoot at us. But with equal violence the guardians of the Basic Law came to lecture us about patriotism and some of them even insisted that Hong Kong wanted to declare itself independent.*

He also emphasised the importance of the march on 1st July, the anniversary of the transfer of Hong Kong to China:

*Marching, he said, allows people to express their own feelings. Not giving them the opportunity to protest runs the risk of producing even more chaos.*

After six years Cardinal Joseph Zen, was readmitted to Shanghai. He made a three day visit to his native city in mainland China. It is the first time that Cardinal Zen, one of the most openly vocal critics of the Beijing government, had been allowed to return to Shanghai since he became Bishop six years ago. He was able to visit the seminary where he used to teach, and visit his brother-in-law's grave with his sister. On his return he said that the invitation to visit Shanghai was a sign of openness on the part of the new leadership:

*I hope it may be a first step forward.*

<sup>1</sup> In 1984, Deng Xiaoping proposed to apply the principle of One country, two systems to Hong Kong, despite the practice of socialism in mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau, could continue to practice capitalism under a high degree of autonomy for fifty years after reunification.

# Salesian News from the East

## Sister Elizabeth McLaughlan 1907 - 2006

### Yangon: 2nd June 2006

With just 45 Salesians, the relatively new Vice Province of Myanmar was amongst the smallest of the Salesian Vice Provinces around the world. The FMA Vice Province of Cambodia-Myanmar has just 25 Sisters. Now, with the first profession of eight SDB novices and four FMA novices, there has been a great leap forward for the Salesian Family in this small, but significant part of the world. The places of the eight first professed SDBs were taken by nine new novices and those of the four FMAs by five new novices. These are being followed by another 23 pre-novices, and aspirants. The Superior of the Vice Province, Fr Joachim Ye Maung has announced the intention of the Rector Major to visit Myanmar in February 2007, for the Golden Jubilee of the Seminary.

### Bangkok: 8th May 2006

Vocations, in the Thai province continue to show signs of growth. The month of May began with a welcome ceremony for four new novices at Sampran, followed by a Mass during which five young brothers renewed their temporary vows. Three of these will head off to practical training once the new school year opens, which will be within the next fortnight. Their presence in the formation communities will also be a stimulus for other young hopefuls.

### Korea: May 2006

May 5th -7th has been a special weekend at Salesian High School in Kwangju. 51 priest past-pupils were invited to return to their old school for its celebration of 50 years of pastoral and educational service in this city of 1.4 million people, and archdiocese of 250,000 Catholics. The priests are spread out across all seven dioceses of Korea and overseas, ministering to Korean communities, for example, in Melbourne, Australia and Tampa, Florida. The number includes seven Salesians.

Currently Kwangju Salesian High has 1,600 students, a community of seven Salesians and around 100 staff. It has a reputation for being amongst the best schools in the city in academic terms, and plays a


leading role in youth ministry and faith education in South Korea's Catholic High School system. Around 60 students are baptised annually, after a two-year preparation.

May 5th, the beginning of the Jubilee celebrations, was an important date in Korea, the birthday of Lord Buddha (a movable feast in the Buddhist world) so it was also a national holiday. It became an opportunity for a special school festival organised by the past pupils with current students as volunteers. The income from this day will go to two special projects: the East Timor scholarship programme, and for poor youth in Kwangju's Northern district. An estimated 10,000 visitors contributed to these two projects.

May 6th was the Feast of St. Dominic Savio, so this became an occasion for a feast of gratitude as the day also marked Foundation Day for the school. The Eucharistic celebration was presided over by the Archbishop of Kwangju. Around 20 diocesan priest past-pupils concelebrated, and of course there were numerous members of the Salesian Family.



*Manila, Philippines **The Table of Hope.**  
Christ breaking bread in the city slums with street children, a mural the work of a Salesian past pupil on the outside wall of the diocesan seminary.*



Sister Elizabeth was born on the 6th July 1907. Her two brothers were sent to the Salesian College in Battersea. Raymond later became a priest in the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. One of her two sisters, Molly, entered Carmel although ill-health forced her to return to the family. Elizabeth was sent to the Salesian Sisters in Chertsey when she was fourteen. She showed a special talent for music and played the piano well, a gift she was to use throughout her life. She asked to join the Sisters and she made her novitiate in Cowley and was professed in 1928. After her profession, she returned to Chertsey where she taught class-singing and gave piano lessons while continuing her own study of music. Elizabeth gained a Diploma for piano playing and became an associate member of the London College of Music in 1934. She spent time with the boarders, chatting informally with them as she gave out pocket money showing an interest in the families and holiday plans. She did similar work in Hastings, our home for children in care.

In 1965 she moved north to Liverpool to join the newly formed community there. She took charge of the Youth Club. She knew how to combine friendliness and trust, finding ways to allow the girls to exercise their own sense of responsibility. She knew how to befriend the girls and develop their confidence in using their skills and abilities. After twelve years her health began to fail. She retired to Cowley where she lived for nearly thirty years.

When she first went to Cowley she helped to care for other elderly and sick Sisters. During these first years, she recorded in her notebook, that she was impressed by the holy deaths she had witnessed of a number of Sisters, and she resolved to spend these last years preparing to die well. God gave her plenty of time for preparation! She never forgot to express her gratitude for any little thing done for her. Every Christmas she would write a letter of thanks to the Sisters who were looking after her. She was a strong believer and had a deep devotion to the Mass and to Our Lady. Even when her health was very poor, she was grateful to be taken down to Mass. She loved her rosary and wanted it with her always. In her last months, even her carers got to know that before they left, their last duty was to hand her rosary beads to her. Because she lived so long, many of us knew her only as the *oldest Sister in the province*. She died in the convent in Cowley on the 9th March.

The presence of some of her past-pupils at her funeral was a reminder of the active Salesian Sister she had once been. May she rest in peace.

# Salesian Sisters in the World

A Religious Province consists of *all the local communities in a particular area who share their fraternal life and apostolic projects.* (Const. art 143).

At present, there are:  
81 Provinces in 89 nations within the 5 continents, with a total of 1511 local communities.



## **AFRICA - 438 Sisters (FMA) belonging to 83 Communities, in 22 countries working in:**

- Promotional or self-help centres
- Vocational schools and literacy programmes
- Village visitation
- Health centres and dispensaries
- Rural craft centres
- Homes and shelters for young people at risk
- Youth clubs and centres for young people

## **AMERICA - 4710 Sisters (FMA) belonging to 596 Communities, in 23 countries working in:**

- After-school care and free-time activities
- Evening schools to cater for those who are poorer
- Youth clubs and centres for young people
- Professional training and self-help groups
- Mission centres among indigenous peoples and rural dwellers
- Basic communities
- Communities living in slum areas and on the margins of large cities
- Shelters and homes for street children
- Collaboration with social administrative structures that act as a voice in defence of young people and women
- Private, parish and state schools of every kind and level
- Promotional and cultural free-time activities
- Religious development and retreat days for young people and adults
- Rehabilitation centres for problem youth

## **ASIA - 2118 Sisters (FMA) belonging to 262 Communities, in 18 countries working in:**

- Schools of every kind and level
- Small pastoral care centres in remote villages
- Health education and nutrition
- Centres for the advancement of women
- Literacy courses
- Shelters for young girls and women at risk
- Rehabilitation centres for young former drug addicts

## **EUROPE - 7416 Sisters (FMA) belonging to 583 Communities, present in 22 countries, working in:**

- Schools of every kind and level
- Shelters and homes for young people and women at risk
- Youth clubs and centres for young people
- Vocational training centres

## **OCEANIA - 41 Sisters (FMA) belonging to 11 Communities in 4 countries, working in:**

- Private, parish and state schools of every kind and level
- Promotional and leisure-time cultural activities
- Religious development and retreat days for young people and adults
- Literacy and rehabilitation of problem youth
- Youth centres

Source <http://www.cgfmanet.org>