



THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SALESIAN FAMILY

DON BOSCO TODAY

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REMEMBER THE CHILDREN OF MYANMAR

Editorial



Dear Friends

I would like to begin this editorial with some words of gratitude, to all of you who support the work of Don Bosco by your prayers and your contributions. We do try to acknowledge every donation. If you are happy for us to make this acknowledgment by email, please indicate by giving us your email address, and ticking the appropriate box on page three. I can assure that your email address will not be passed on to anyone else. Postage continues to be a worrying expense. I am aware that there are many friends who support us by direct debit payments and there is always the danger that they are overlooked when it comes to saying *Thank You*. Please be assured that you are always in our prayers, the work of Don Bosco could not continue without your support.

Our leading article in this edition is about Cyclone Nargis which did so much damage to Burma on May 2nd. Although the BBC tends to use the name Burma we will use the name Myanmar in this article only because our Salesian province uses that name. (Burma's democracy movement prefers the word Burma, because they do not accept the legitimacy of the unelected military regime to change the official name of the country. Internationally, both names are recognised.) Our Salesian Bishop in Myanmar, Archbishop Charles Bo, has kept us informed of all the work the Church is doing for the survivors in Myanmar. The Salesians are particularly concerned about the trauma suffered by so many children who have lost their families. Although the events no longer make headlines, please keep them in your prayers

One area of our work in the UK which gives us great satisfaction, is that of publishing. The book *Symbols and Spirituality - Reflecting on John's Gospel* by our provincial, Fr Michael Winstanley, has been a great success. Many people have commented on the way it has given them a new insight into scripture. When Don Bosco sent his first missionaries to South America he gave them a copy of a book which was *The Rule of Life for Salesians*, and said, *Here is Don Bosco going with you*. Whenever we send out books to people, I feel I can say the same words *Here is Don Bosco going with you*. This has been particularly true this year since we have already sold to secondary schools (admittedly at a bargain price) 6000 copies of *Trust the Road*. This book has become, for many schools, a farewell present for school leavers. We get great satisfaction as we struggle with huge parcels of hundreds of these books, to think of the investment of good advice for life contained in this slim volume. I suppose I could say the same of this magazine - *Here is Don Bosco going with you*.

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Remember the Children of Myanmar

25th May 2008

The Archbishop of Rangoon, Charles Bo, a Salesian of Don Bosco, has expressed guarded optimism at the breakthrough by UN chief Ban Ki-Moon with Myanmar authorities to allow aid workers in. His statement follows:

Three weeks after the devastating Cyclone Nargis struck on 2nd and 3rd May, the people of Myanmar are still struggling to come to terms with the scale of the disaster. For those who survived in the affected Delta and Rangoon regions, survival is a day-to-day struggle, with access to clean water, food, shelter and medical attention still limited. In addition to this, the severe water-logging; damage to paddy fields; loss of tools and seed and animals will have a negative impact upon rice production and food security for this vulnerable population.

The local response in Myanmar has been hugely important in these initial few weeks; however, resources and capacity have been stretched. Therefore, I welcome the recent announcement that the government will allow all aid workers into the country. I hope that this announcement is followed through and that international support can build on the local structures and efforts already underway.

Amidst the stories of despair there is also hope. The people of Myanmar have joined together in their solidarity for those affected by the cyclone. People and leaders of all religions have been working together to reach the affected communities and encourage the government to do all they can to help those in need. The stories I have heard from the people who faced and survived the full force of the cyclone and continue to live with dignity and hope pay tribute to the unwavering nature of the human spirit. The humane acts of courage and kindness of those who have volunteered to assist the people in the Delta region, and the international support and solidarity received by the Church in Myanmar, shows further evidence of the generosity of humankind.

In spite of all these efforts, there is still a lot to do to relieve the suffering of our people. Contrary to government reports, the emergency relief phase is not over. Basic needs of hundreds and thousands of people are still to be met. To date, the Catholic Church has reached approximately 25,000 people and provided relief support such as food, shelter and clean drinking water. An important part of the Church response is also to provide psychological and spiritual support to communities affected by these recent traumatic events. Children are particularly vulnerable at this time. Many have lost their parents and need support and protection to help them heal. An important aspect of the Church's response is our ability to reach communities that other organisations and networks cannot currently reach. We are also committed to continuing our support and hope to reach a further 40,000 people with relief and also support communities to rebuild their lives and livelihoods over the coming months and years.

Archbishop Charles Bo SDB

28th May 2008

The following report is first-hand and provides a view, now that aid workers are being allowed to operate, of how demanding the situation is on the ground in the Delta area south west of Rangoon.

From Rangoon it took us four and a half hours in a vehicle to reach Kamazagone. On the first day of our arrival after sharing relief items with those in the camp, about 1200 people, our party branched out into smaller groups to inquire after survivors. We left in a hired motor boat, heading for the remotest village on the Bay of Bengal, a parish with 29 villages which was hit hard by the cyclone. It took us eleven hours to reach the devastated village. They had lost their homes, cattle, property and some of their family members. Of the 29 villages, eight were completely destroyed - no survivors. In the main village, only three buildings were left - the rectory, the Sisters' residence and a boarding house.



Amongst the dead bodies and debris we found some wandering stray dogs and scavengers who collect whatever remains from the victims. Dead bodies, both human and animal, are spread far and wide. No help from the government authority reaches this far. The only provisions for those who remained alive were those provided by the Church helpers.

The following day we went around the village along the seashore where dead bodies were laid in the sand, partially exposed because they had not been buried deep enough. More than 28 were found but others remain hidden in the bushes. In the afternoon we organised a search team to look for the body of the parish priest. He was thrown from his boat by the waves on that fatal day. We had little hope of finding him since two weeks had passed by. With much prayer and adoration by the Sisters who remained at home before the Blessed Eucharist, we began the journey with a party of seventeen helpers. As we passed bodies floating in the river we knew we had little hope of finding one from two weeks ago. We went for an hour and a half to the spot where his boat was wrecked.

There we searched painstakingly under every bush. Against all odds we found his body 400 metres from the river bank, still intact. We left the body for the night and

went back to make a coffin. The next day, we returned in pouring rain to bring his body back to the church for proper burial. Three priests celebrated the Funeral Mass and buried him in the foundation site of the new church. On the way back, we brought nearly 100 people in need of urgent medical care. The return trip took 15 hours in rain, strong wind and waves.

6th June A month after the tragedy

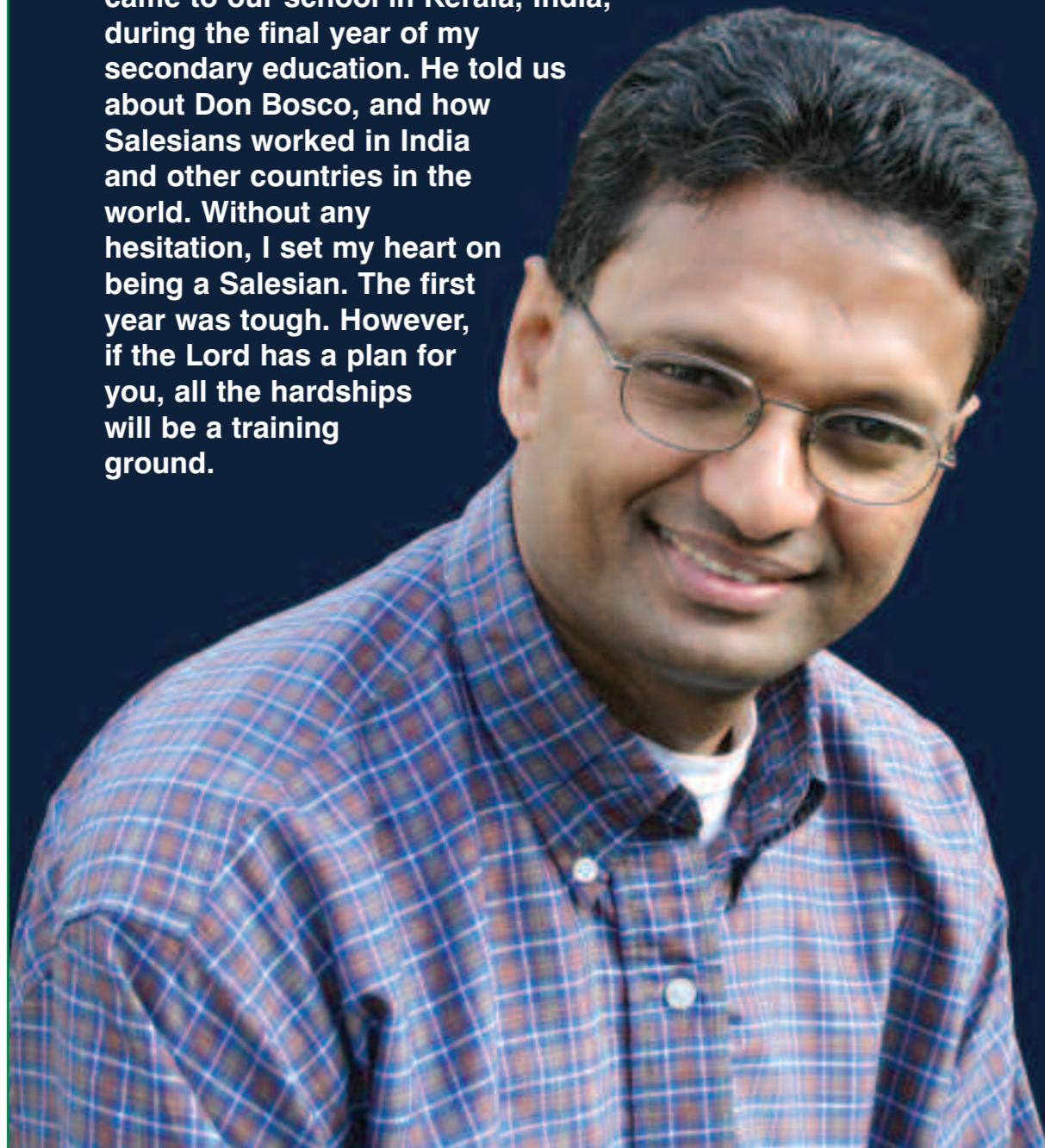
It is a month since the cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar causing chaos and destruction, leading to the loss of about 150,000 human lives. Archbishop Charles Bo SDB writes:

After the cyclone, the map of Myanmar has changed. The change is most evident in the area of Rangoon and the Ayeyawaddy Delta, as can be seen from the satellite images which graphically register the before-and-after pictures, portraying a destruction of large tracts of land. What no satellite could register is the mutilation of the soul of our graceful and long-suffering people. About 2.3 million of our people have a new name: refugees and homeless. People will be lining up in remote villages, waiting for food and aid. The dead are also waiting for a decent burial – Yes! on the tops of trees, floating in waters and in the bushes and on roadside. The spirit of our people is waiting for eternal rest.

Indian but with an African Heart

By Fr Sebastian Koladayil SDB

The Salesian vocations promoter came to our school in Kerala, India, during the final year of my secondary education. He told us about Don Bosco, and how Salesians worked in India and other countries in the world. Without any hesitation, I set my heart on being a Salesian. The first year was tough. However, if the Lord has a plan for you, all the hardships will be a training ground.



During my studies, our late Rector Major Fr Egidio Vigano came to visit us and told us about *Project Africa* and that he needed young and energetic Salesians to take up the challenge of bringing Don Bosco to Africa. When he asked *Who would like to go to Africa?* I had no second thoughts. The seed of the African mission was planted in me on that day.

During my study of Philosophy, the Bishop of Iringa Tanzania, the late Mario Mugulunde, visited us and told us that he needed young Salesians to come to his Diocese to do Don Bosco's work. From then on the seeds of the African mission, planted in me, began to grow. A few of us started a missionary group which came together to pray and to enjoy other social activities. An invitation came for volunteers to go to Africa for practical training, and I volunteered. However my superior felt that I was not mature enough!

During the next five years of my practical training and studies, I often reminded the Provincial that I would still like to go to the African Missions. Finally, as if worn out by my persistence, he told me that I could go. I was to begin my Theology studies in Nairobi. My family wasn't happy. For them, Africa meant poverty and wild animals.

When I arrived in Africa, in August 1987, I instinctively knew that this was what I had been waiting for. A new feeling came over me. Finally, I was in the land of my dreams; new people, new language, new places. Africa was not what I had imagined; the huts and wild animals were not part of Nairobi. The real Africa remained undiscovered.

Life at Don Bosco Utume, the residence of the students of Theology, was a wonderful experience. The Salesians were from Poland and India with an Italian Rector. *Why are the Hindus studying theology with us?* remarked a Polish Salesian one day, not

knowing that Christianity arrived in India before Poland.

Going to different parishes at the weekends to work with young people was one of the highlights of my life at that time. This oratory experience climaxed in the *Bosco Meet*, where competitions for all the young people were held every year.

In Nairobi, where practically every Indian is a business person it was not easy for the people to see Indians as Christians, or even religious. Once, on a Mission Sunday in the parish where I went to work, the parish priest, a Mexican, said in his sermon, *Even Indians can be missionaries these days*. Everyone looked at me as I sat in the congregation.

During holidays we went to Tanzania to learn Kiswahili. This helped us to get in touch with the real Africa and prepared us for the time after ordination. It was on one of these holidays, with one of my Salesian friends, I decided to go and live in a Tanzanian village for two weeks. The parish priest took us to the village and left us with provisions for ourselves and for the host family. Special arrangements were made to provide us with accommodation and the whole village took responsibility for us. Some brought water, others vegetables and various items of food to the family where we stayed. For me, those two weeks were a truly African experience.

My first appointment as a new priest was to the Don Bosco Youth Training Centre, Iringa Tanzania. I was in charge of the Youth Centre. Those first years were full of activities. We welcomed the youth from all walks of life, organising sporting, cultural and spiritual activities. We had a band, a concert hall and a recording studio at our disposal. The culmination of all this activity was the Don Bosco Youth Festival in which various secondary schools competed in an array of activities. Later, this became the main youth activity in the entire region encouraging many more Secondary Schools to participate. In the six years that followed, I was to

act as the Principal of the Technical School and the Rector in charge of the parish. As time passed, fatigue was taking over, and a request for a break was responded to negatively due to lack of personnel. The struggle with the language was daunting but after six years, just when I was able to manage comfortably, I was transferred to another parish mission in Kenya where the language and the situation was quite different.

Before I took up my new appointment, I was asked to help for three months in the north eastern part of Kenya, 600 kilometres from Nairobi where we have a mission working with the nomadic people. The place was far away from civilisation and the heat was unbearable. Sickness and death among the population was common and I contracted malaria. I was flown to Nairobi and was treated just in time.

The seven years that followed in the parish turned out to be some of the best years of my life. Whenever I was tired and wanted to slow down, the sight of a group of vibrant young people encouraged me to get involved. The activities in the parish were different. The work was more pastoral and spiritual: youth retreats, leadership camps, seminars and educational programmes. As time went by, the existing fifteen out-stations grew to be twenty. A computer school, a project for the handicapped children, a youth library and a newly-completed Don Bosco Integrated Human Development Centre with plenty of activities were started, and I was appointed as the Communication Coordinator of the Diocese and adviser to the bishop at the same time. *Of the forty two parishes I have, this is the best!* remarked the bishop during one of his visits. These responsibilities gave me little time for myself, but the love and appreciation of the people kept me going; I had no time to think about my exhaustion. After every Mass in the out-station, we returned with food for ourselves and every month the mothers took turns to bring provisions for the priests and the other pastoral workers. The young people were always willing to collaborate and an inspirational cultural dance group topped every competition.

The Masses were celebrated in African style, with lots of singing and dancing. Even the European volunteers who didn't go to Mass in their own country, fully participated in the Mass which could last up to two hours.

In 2001, when I was alone in the parish, I was attacked by a gang of nine thieves. They stole all the parish money and forced me to drive them away by car before they let me go. This experience left me deeply traumatised which lasted for a long time. I used to sleep in different rooms which were spread around the centre; any noise at night disturbed me. But the day after the theft a wonderful thing happened. I was alone again but the young people came to keep me company. They lit a fire, organised coffee and food, then we sat around, sang and prayed spontaneous prayers deep from the heart the whole night. It was the best thing that happened as a result of this theft and a deeper bond was created between me and the young people.

A year later the thieves returned, but this time the parishioners were prepared. When the thieves 'hammered' on the iron door of the rectory hundreds of parishioners appeared and overpowered them. The affection that was shown by the people touched me. After the first theft I had said, *If this happens again I am leaving!* Because of the support and affection displayed by the parishioners, I was determined to stay.

Although the support of the people was wonderful, I was exhausted. My superiors realised I needed a change and I was given the opportunity to study which I had requested for many years. I was sent to Rome, and I am now completing my studies in London where I am studying Media and Journalism. I am looking forward to going back to Africa; for though I am Indian, I have an African heart.

The Bear Facts

Hello Children



Don't worry if you sometimes make a mistake in your schoolwork; everyone does; even me!

A teacher once told us that a boy was writing about a man called **FRANZ FERDINAND**. However the boy didn't hear the Teacher properly and wrote **FRANCE THIRD IN HAND**. Oooops!

Like most children we enjoy going to school. Our school is called **The Forest School**. Sometimes someone is naughty and gets told off, but most of the time we are very happy and have lots of fun as well as work. We do lots of singing, we even sing our grace before meals. We do lots of sports, such as gymnastics, netball and football. Last night the football team drew 1-1 with the Meadows School. Graham Greyhound scored our goal.

I bet he's faster than Cristiano Ronaldo!

Rio is always joking. He asked me if I knew what subject snakes like best. I said *I didn't know* and he said, *Hisstory*.

Aaaagh! Stop it Rio. Your jokes are TERRIBLE!

Suzi's favourite subject is Spanish. Her teacher, Mr Fernando Fox, has taught the class how to say, 'Hello I am pleased to see you,' in Spanish - '**Hola me complace verlo a usted**'.

Wow!

Molly likes Maths. Can you do fractions? Here is a question for you. What is $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4}$?

I love Geography. You may remember that my family came from Italy. I've been to France, Spain, Portugal and Greece as well as Scotland, England and Wales so that makes 8 countries altogether. I am sure many of you have been to more countries.



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE COMPETITION

Well done to everyone who entered the Spring competition. The winners all received a copy of either, **Rosie and Katie go to Mass** or **Chloe and Jack visit the Vatican**.

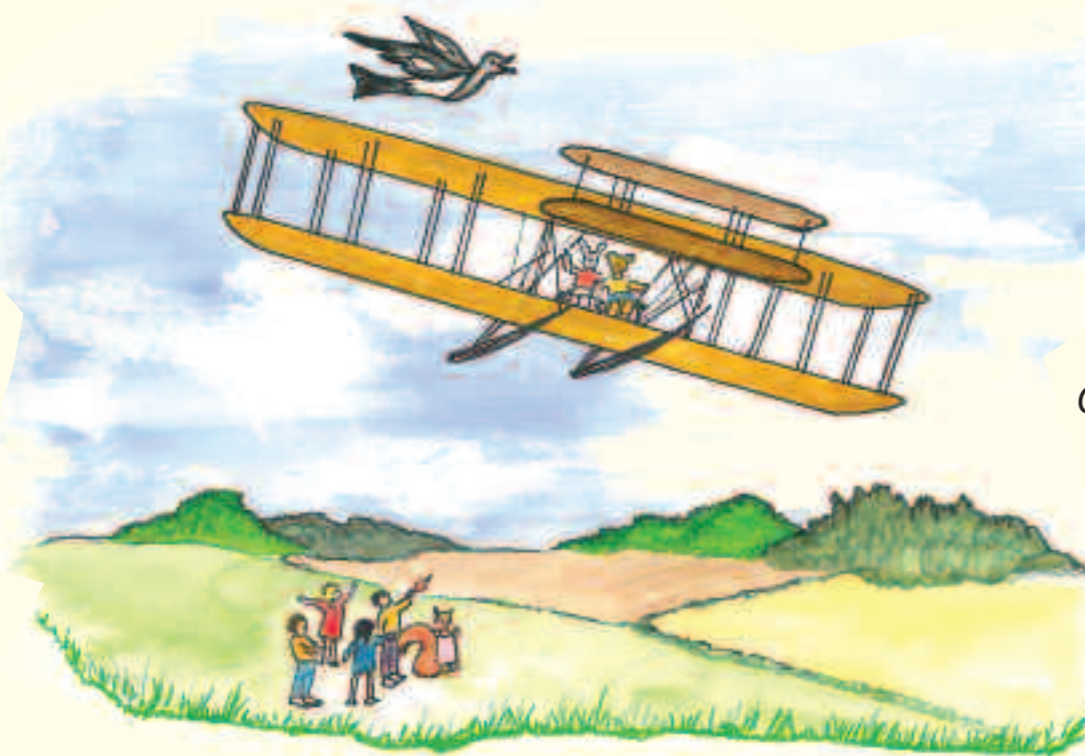
They were:

Geraldine from Stockport, Jessica and Franklyn from London, George from Milnthorpe, Callum, Natt and Jacob from Bolton, Joyal from Oxford, Hannah from Coatbridge, Beth from Darlington, Naomi from Gloucester and Chloe from Canterbury.

Bosco Bear



SCHOOL IS COOL!



Now that is very interesting, said Mr Owl.

The very first aeroplane flew just over 100 years ago. Two American brothers called Wilbur and Orville Wright flew their plane for 12 seconds, at only 7 miles per hour, just 40 metres above the ground. That's interesting, said Bosco. Dingle...ingle...ingle...ing. Fire Alarm, said Mr. Owl. Everyone outside quietly and quickly.

Cate Cat had been in a Cookery lesson and had nearly burned some cakes which had set the smoke alarm off.



Now that was very interesting, said Mr Owl, when they got back into class. In 1666 the Great Fire of London started in a baker's shop and it spread and burned down most of the city. At that time houses were made of wood.

Cool, said Rio.

Actually it was rather hot! said Molly.

Exactly 600 years before the Fire of London, in 1066, England was

Today, said Mr Oswald Owl (Bosco's teacher),

We are going to have a History lesson.

Good, said Bosco.

Great, said Molly.

Cool, said Suzi.

Yuk, said Rio. He began to make a paper aeroplane and whizzed it across the room.

Mr. Owl did NOT look pleased.

invaded by an army from France, led by a man called William the Conqueror, continued Mr. Owl. He won the Battle of Hastings and took over the country.

What a cheek! said Rio.

Actually your name is foreign,

Rio, said Suzi.

What do you mean? replied

Rio.

Rio is a Spanish word for River. You're River Rabbit!

Oh! said Rio.

Don't worry, said Bosco. Bosco is an Italian word for a Forest, so I could be called Forest Bear!

1066 and 1666 are famous years in English History, continued Mr Owl.

So is 1966. Does anyone know why?

Sir! Sir! Me, me, me....., said a very excited Rio. He didn't know that he liked History this much.

Yes? said Mr Owl.

Because England won the World Cup, said Rio.

He knew he was right.

Correct, said the teacher.

Well done, Rio. Here's a gold star to put in your book.

Rio was so pleased. He'd never had a gold star before.

I didn't know that football was History, he said to Molly.

Everything that's ever happened is History, said his friend.



In the style of the Bayeux Tapestry.



YOU ONLY GET OUT WHAT YOU PUT IN.

Everyone is good at something. In fact everyone is good at quite a few things. It might be singing or PlayStation or football or making friends or being on time or drawing.

It always feels good to be able to answer people's questions. You should try to learn as much as possible at school. I remember being told that we are on a planet called Earth, which moves around the Sun at 67,000 miles per hour. So we are now about 1,000 miles from where we were 1 minute ago! Spooky! But true!



500 years before the Battle of Hastings, a tribe of people called the Angles invaded Britain and named it after themselves - **ANGLAND**. This became **ENGLAND**.

But where did the Angles come from? They came from what is today Germany and Denmark. So, in the beginning the people in this country were Germans and Danes! Spooky! But true!

Some children work harder at school than others, but one thing I know is that everyone likes to do well. There's an old saying, **You only get out what you put in**. This means that the harder you try, and the more you work, the better you will do. That's NOT spooky but it's definitely true!

WHAT'S MY ANSWER?

Answer each question in no more than 20 words. The winning entry will be chosen by our Editor, Fr Bailey, and published in the Autumn Magazine.

Closing date 31st August 2008.

What is your favourite TV programme?	
What is your favourite meal?	
What have you learned from your family?	
What have you learned from your friends?	
What makes you really happy?	
Write a short prayer.	

Name _____

Address _____

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Evangelising by Educating

by Fr Pascual Chávez

For Don Bosco the young were his masters, and to save them he had to understand them. Ever a practical man, he knew that the real value of an educational method is measured by its capacity to motivate those who are discouraged, to give hope to those who felt hopeless. By training young people in a profession, he prepared them for life, making them useful to themselves and to society. Don Bosco was always an educator: in the playground, in the dining-room, in the classroom, in the workshop, in the chapel. Because of this, the Salesian educational project is not limited by any structure.

Don Bosco's pastoral approach was never reduced to simply religious instruction or church services. It was an evangelical charity that took practical steps to liberate and promote young people who had been abandoned and gone astray.

Educating and evangelising are different, but for Christians they cannot be separated: they need to complement and enrich each other. Everyone knows the state of European culture and the difficulties met by the Church in evangelising the new generations. To speak about religion in today's Europe is something quite complicated. The traffic lights in Europe are on red. There have been many articles and reports published in recent years about the state of religion. In general they are pessimistic.

Religious ignorance and the prejudices that young people absorb every day from some of the media have fed them with the impression of a conservative Church, an institution that is opposed to modern culture, especially in the field of sexual morality, and therefore everything that religion has to offer is automatically devalued. The tragedy is the present break in the chain of the transmission of the faith. The natural and traditional places (family, school and parish) don't work any more; religious ignorance increases in the new generations, and the silent exodus from the Church continues.

Religious ignorance is almost absolute. It is not easy to say what image young people have of God, but certainly the Christian God has lost the central place in comparison with the popular media which makes gods out of people from the worlds of sport, music and the cinema. Young people have a passion for freedom and are not queuing up at the doors of the church: they often think that the Church is an obstacle to their freedom. In the face of this situation, what sort of education do the state and church institutions have to offer? Pope John Paul II called the Church to a new evangelisation to be carried out with new zeal, new methods, and in new forms.

Adolescents and young people are generous by nature and become very enthusiastic about causes they consider important. Why has Christ ceased to matter to them? The Church needs to learn the languages of the people of each generation, every ethnic background and in all places. The Church clearly has a serious language problem that prevents her from presenting, in an appropriate way, the salvation that Christ offers. Salesian education starts from where people are, from their human and religious experience, from their griefs and anxieties, joys and hopes, giving special importance to the role of personal witness in the transmission of the faith and of values.



Listen as Your Day Unfolds

(Desree Song: Gotta Be)



VIDES UK is a voluntary organisation, within the Salesian Family, that works with young people and children in disadvantaged areas, both here in the UK and abroad. I've been part of this organisation for about nine years and my journey has been one of challenge, discovery, growth and, most importantly, love.

At the very heart of my Salesian vocation is the opportunity to live and work with a group of young people who share the same values. It is this community experience that has sustained me and nurtured my love for my work, leading to the most exciting challenges I have ever encountered.

I believe that the more you give to your work with young people, the more you receive, but you need to give with love! That is the secret; I have been privileged to see so many young people who give so generously of their time. I currently co-ordinate the UK Projects Team and work as part of the Executive Committee. Working with the UK Projects Team means I am able to take an active part in the direction of our summer camps, which I love! Every year, our camps are the place where I feel most alive and most fulfilled. Living in a

community means I am often able to build meaningful relationships with other volunteers and learn their individual stories, as well as working with children and young people throughout the day. We spend ten days in a particular area and work alongside the local community to offer a youth project to local children and young people. We work from early morning until late at night and sleep on the floor, but we have the time of our lives! As volunteers, we also receive training every day from an experienced volunteer. Over the years, these *formation workshops* have helped me to think about the person I am and the person I want to be. This is what makes our camps unique, as volunteers receive as much as the young people themselves. We all aim to work with Salesian values and to share the Salesian charism with everyone we meet.

Throughout my nine years, I have really tried to listen to the call that volunteering in the Salesian mission has offered me. In 2004, I made the decision to apply to go abroad with VIDES and was joined by two of my closest friends. We were given the opportunity to travel to Tanzania for nine weeks and then to work in Kenya. I had always felt the call to work abroad, and when this opportunity arose, I was both excited and terrified, but I knew it was something I wanted to do. After a lot of preparation, we ventured off to East Africa for a summer that would change our lives.

We went to Tanzania to work with children and young people, to teach them and to organize different activities for them. We stayed in the city of Dar-Es-Salaam. Our home was in a part of the city called Temeke, a little shanty town and we lived alongside Salesian Sisters. During our time there, we were blessed to work with the children and young people of the local community, teaching them English, helping to run a summer camp and helping with the youth club at the weekends.

The work was often exhausting, but so fulfilling. The children were grateful for everything we did and most importantly, they were grateful that we were just there. The community we lived with became our second family. The Sisters made us so welcome and their house became our home too. We helped with the cooking, cleaning and used to engage in some of the most inspiring and challenging conversations with the Sisters. Their care, friendship and love really were at the centre of so many lives in Temeke.

Looking back now, it wasn't easy and there were so many challenges to face. I missed my family and friends and it was hard not just being able to pick up the phone whenever I wanted to have a chat with them. It was also hard to leave the children and young people who had become a part of our daily lives. We had built many

relationships with the children and young people of Temeke, so to leave them was extremely difficult. They had taught us so much and I'm sure those lessons are still reflected in our lives today. I learnt so much about the reality of life, about an active and hopeful faith, even in the midst of great suffering. I also realised that the Tanzanian people were rich in spirit, the greatest richness there is in life. The children, young people and adults genuinely cared for each other; they wanted to be there for others and wanted to share in the lives of other people. The reality of life I witnessed was extremely humbling and continues to inspire me today.

Coming back to the UK was more difficult than I had anticipated and I am only beginning to realise the impact Temeke has had on me. I now firmly believe that we live in one world and that world is everyone's responsibility, no matter where we live. I am grateful that I was given the opportunity by VIDES, to visit such a beautiful part of the world and I will always keep the people close to my heart. Their simplicity and their joy inspired me and will always inspire me. I just hope that I can live my life in a way that begins to reflect the values of the beautiful people I had a chance to live alongside.

This is why VIDES is so special to so many people. The opportunities help us to enhance our life experience, to help us to grow, to help us live with a spirit of service to others. My title for this piece, *Listen as your day unfolds* means just this: we need to listen to the opportunities present in each day as it unfolds, to the people, to the stories and then to actively listen to how we are called to respond. VIDES and my place within the Salesian Family has helped me to begin to respond through the mission I believe in strongly. I hope I will continue to grow in that response for many years to come.

Mary Cotter



Photos: R. Plummer SOUTH EASTERN GLOBE MAGAZINE

Swords into Ploughshares - Arms into Legs

The Don Bosco technical school in Tuol Kork, on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, has the ordered air of a German industrial estate. Large buildings line clean streets where a myriad of signs promote cleanliness in the middle of one of the fastest emerging property hotspots in the capital. As you approach the welding department, the sound of construction can be heard and a white-haired man is bent over a piece of furniture. Val Sutherland, 70, is a seasoned engineer with the Australian Business Volunteers (ABV) programme. Standing back, he seems satisfied with the prototype of what appears to be a wooden garden bench with unusual arms and legs. Only after close examination is it obvious that it is, in part, made from AK-47 automatic rifles. Called **The Bench**, it is a project initiated through the school and will be launched to an unsuspecting public this month at the Sunway hotel with a range of avant-garde furniture made from decommissioned weapons that were collected by the Cambodian government through the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The project aims to lay to rest the popular image of Cambodia as a war-torn country where misuse of illicit weapons and weapon related crimes is an ongoing issue although the country is becoming recognised as a world leader for its weapons destruction program. *I was impressed with the project when I first saw it,* says Father Leo Ochoa, a Filipino Salesian and director of the Don Bosco school since 1998. It seemed perfect for this country, to turn weapons into art.

The school opened in 1991 and worked for five years in various refugee camps around the country. *Initially we were financed by Belgian, German and Italian partner organisations and our running costs were paid for by USAID until 2000,* says Fr Ochoa. Today the 600 students at its Phnom Penh location are selected out of more than 3,000 applicants who come from the neediest sections of society. They are enrolled in a two-year course after which half of them are given apprenticeships at the school. *Selection is very hard,* says Ochoa. After admission exams over six days, those selected have to decide on two chosen courses for the two years. The six courses offered in Phnom Penh are automotive, electrical, electronics, mechanical, welding and printing. In addition, subjects such as mathematics, English, Khmer and general computer science are taken two hours a week. After they learn practical skills here, they can continue to study either at the National Technical Training Institute or another technical school to get theoretical knowledge. The best students are offered jobs as teachers and trainers at the school. Since 2000, all the teachers have been Cambodian. By summer 2008, Don Bosco in Phnom Penh – it has other schools in Kompong Som, Kep, Battambang and Poipet – will have trained more than 3,000 students. *All of them get a job after leaving here,* says Fr Ochoa. *They are among the top craftsmen in Cambodia and are much sought after.*

Today, 40% of the school's revenue comes from the commercial services the school offers and 60% comes from its other organisations. *We do printing services, car maintenance, computer and network repairs and anything else related to our training programmes,* says Fr Ochoa. *It also helps keep the students close to the job market they will work in.* With regard to the extraordinary peace symbol benches, a spokesperson from the project said: *It was not easy to get clearance for the weapons to be used. The metal frame is there*

*and therefore they still have a value, be it because of the iron or their potential to be rebuilt. It took a very long time to convince the sceptics and get permission from the government for us to be able to start producing **The Bench**.*

All proceeds from the sale of the furniture goes to the school. Val Sutherland, who offers professional knowledge to Cambodian organisations and government programmes, talks about his assignments with Don Bosco Technical School. *I came here to help create the trophies for the 2007 Volleyball World Cup and the CNLVD national volleyball league, worked on the second phase of the ANZ Royal's racing wheelchairs, then The Bench and a few other sculptural objects made from destroyed weapons. It has always been a pleasure and very rewarding to work with Don Bosco. The students are great and always interested in trying new things.* Underlining the strict discipline and rules at the school, he says he has to change to a new group of students every week, as they are rotated between departments, with no exceptions. Moving between groups, he says, makes stable production a challenge, but the key to his success has been to initiate a training programme that allows learning through peer teaching. Even after his 2008 ABV tenure is completed, the Don Bosco students will continue to produce The Bench, which will hopefully come to represent a powerful symbol of Cambodia's ability to turn tragedy into triumph. *Article courtesy of South Eastern Globe Magazine.*



Fr John Corcoran SDB 1913 - 2008

Fr John, whose life among us we remember with gratitude, was a good man, a holy man, a person on whom God's Spirit of love and peace rested in a very special way. The person of Jesus and his Christian faith, his Salesian vocation and his priestly ministry were all very much at the centre of his life and he was always deeply aware of the many wonderful ways in which he had been blessed, gifted by God. And these gifts with which God so generously blessed him were not kept to himself; he shared them generously with all those around him, throughout his long life as a Salesian.

His Salesian life began at Thornleigh, Bolton in September 1925 where he was one of the first pupils to enter the new school; and when his school days were over he began his formation as a Salesian, first of all at Cowley, Oxford and then later in Rome. Even before his ordination in July 1942, he had begun teaching Philosophy to the young Salesians of our province and that was a role he fulfilled with great diligence and commitment for the next 13 years. From 1955 till 1980 he exchanged the lecture room for the classroom, working and ministering as a teacher at our Salesian schools at Bolton, Chertsey, Bootle and Shrigley. When he retired from teaching, he moved into more specific pastoral work, firstly in the parish at Bollington, and then as a chaplain to the RAF and later as army chaplain at Abingdon.

Even when it was time to retire from his army chaplaincy John was not one for retiring altogether. For a year he was chaplain to the Salesian Sisters at Cowley and then when he moved to Farnborough he became chaplain to the Sisters at Lafosse, a role he fulfilled until the beginning of last year. Looking back over Fr John's 65 years of priestly ministry, one must be impressed by John's amazing adaptability. He was a man of wide learning who even in his nineties was still devouring books on all sorts of subjects and still corresponding with friends in German and other languages; and wherever he found himself he took his wisdom and his balanced judgement with him. Fr John was totally open to the promptings of the Spirit. Such openness is very much at the heart of being a Salesian. Don Bosco was docile to the Spirit and in Fr John he



could not have had a more faithful follower. Whatever he was asked to do by the Provincial and his Council, he did so willingly and uncomplainingly. Those same Salesian qualities also characterised the daily living out of his Salesian life.

When I was first ordained I found myself at Shrigley and one of my jobs was to draw up the weekly list of Mass supplies. John was also a member of the community and I have never forgotten his generosity and availability. Fr John was always willing to be sent wherever he was needed. Wherever he went he brought his deep commitment to his priestly ministry and his great love of people with him; and such was his kindness and concern, his serenity and his gentle sense of humour that people of all ages, young and old, took him to their hearts. Even in his later years at Farnborough, his care and practical concern for his confreres was very evident - and something I will never forget, and as the Sisters at Lafosse know so well, there was nothing dearer to his heart than being asked to celebrate Mass or hear confessions.

Whatever he did, was always diligently prepared; revealing both his depth of learning and his love of a good joke. At the heart of Fr John's life was his deep commitment to Jesus and his own life of prayer. After a long and dedicated life, his Master has heard his prayer. He has left us in peace and I'm sure he is already enjoying the fullness of salvation prepared for him.

Fr Hugh Preston SDB

Brother Tom Caulfield SDB 1918 - 2008

Tom was from Great Harwood, Blackburn and was a life-long supporter of Blackburn Rovers. He entered the novitiate in Beckford in 1938 and made his final profession there in 1943. The report on his application to enter the novitiate stated: *This candidate has been remarkable for his piety and regularity.*

He taught in Blaisdon from 1944 to 1994, apart from a four year stint in South Africa. My memories of Tom, in Blaisdon, are of a great Salesian, a community man, deeply committed to his vocation, quietly spiritual, never a doubt about the priority of his faith. Tom was always willing to lend a hand, to go the extra mile. Tom had a fascinating way of disagreeing with you. He would begin with sincere praise. *That's good, very good.* Then you knew to wait for the inevitable **but**. *But if I were doing it, I wouldn't do it that way.*

Tom was a brilliant craftsman, indeed a perfectionist who could never tolerate mediocrity. Yet his Blaisdon pupils were loud in praise of his patience with them and his understanding of their limitations, while quietly insisting on the right way to do things. Many of our communities have reason to be grateful to Tom for well turned-out pieces of furniture for the chapel or dining room. His furniture is everywhere, singing his praises.

In Blaisdon, in the 1950s dry-rot was discovered in one of the ceiling hammer-beams over the main staircase, experts were called in and quoted astronomical figures for the repair. Tom found a Blaisdon oak, cut it, carved it, matched it to the healthy beams and replaced the rotted beam with the help of some Blaisdon boys. Twenty years later, it was found to be in perfect condition.

A past pupil emailed from Brisbane to say Tom was a wonderful teacher and a real gentleman, with boundless patience.a *humble, holy, wonderful man*. Another from New Zealand called him *one of the great influences on my life*.

Even when he was well over eighty years of age, Tom insisted on preparing the evening snacks for the community at the weekends. In his last weeks of illness Tom was particularly grateful for all the help he received, full of praise for those who cared for him in St Joseph's, and the nursing staff and doctors at the Bolton Hospital. The evening before he died, when he had received Communion, he was content. He was ready to meet his Maker. May he rest in peace.

Fr Aidan Murray SDB



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