



THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SALESIAN FAMILY

DON BOSCO TODAY

PROJECT EUROPE

full story on page 4



DON BOSCO

THE SALESIAN BULLETIN • YEAR 117 • ISSUE 2 • SUMMER 2009

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Editorial >>

Dear Friends

You will notice that we have changed the format of *Don Bosco Today*. It is an attempt to make this magazine easier to read. We would welcome your

comments on the new format or on any of our articles. If you know of anyone who would appreciate a copy being sent to them please advise them that a phone call (**01204308811**) or email (**joyce@salesians.org.uk**) will guarantee them a copy. I would like to thank you for the support you give to the work of Don Bosco, your generosity always impresses me.

Earlier this year we were privileged to be asked by the Australian Salesian Province to publish a fascinating work on *Don Bosco* by Fr Ian Murdoch. Ian, who died in January of this year, devoted much of his very active Salesian life to the study of Don Bosco. His book *Starting Again from Don Bosco* has been very well received and

its publication is one of the ways we have marked the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Salesians of Don Bosco. We are offering this commemorative edition to our readers for a reduced launch price of £10. All our books, including this book, will be offered postage free until September 1st. We would really appreciate reader's reviews of any of our books. We could publish these reviews on our website (anonymously if you so wish).

As always, this issue of *Don Bosco Today* attempts to look at the work of Don Bosco for young people in different parts of the world. For so many years our country always had a great tradition of missionary endeavour; so many men and women travelled to distant lands to preach the gospel. However we have to face the reality that our own country is now missionary territory and we must welcome missionaries from other countries. As you will see on page four, the Salesians have started *Project Europe* in response to this reality,

Tony Bailey SDB

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Speaking of the Salesian Family today is to describe a certain sense of *citizenship*.

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DESIGN AND PRINTING
Concept4Creative Tel 01282 611331
Printed on paper manufactured from a sustainable source using vegetable based inks

ARTWORK
Val O'Brien

PHOTOGRAPHY
ANS Rome
Fotalia

CHILDREN'S PAGE
Cliff Partington

WEBSITES WORTH VISITING
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Pioneers Of Project Europe

This interchange of ideas and concerns is vital in the process of **inculturation**.



Last year the Salesians launched *Project Europe*, with the aim of leading the continent back to its Christian roots. This project is similar to *Project Africa*, which was launched by the Salesians in the late 1970s and resulted in a surge of Salesian missionary activity on that continent. In 2008 Father Pascual Chávez, Rector Major of the Salesians, said:

Today, more than ever, we become aware that our presence in Europe needs to be re-thought. We need to renew our Salesian presence for greater impact and effectiveness in this continent. We must seek a new form of evangelisation, in order to respond to the spiritual and moral needs of the many young people, who appear to be wanderers without guides and without destination.

One way of renewing the Salesian presence in Europe is the creation of the necessary conditions for warmly welcoming Salesians from other parts of the world, who are prepared to work with young people in another country in Europe. However we must be aware of the

need of a process of *inculturation*. What do we mean by inculturation? In February 1981, Pope John Paul II said, in an important message to the peoples of Asia, broadcast from the Philippines:

Wherever she is, the Church must sink her roots deeply into the spiritual and cultural soil of the country, assimilate all genuine values, enriching them also with the insights that she has received from Jesus Christ.

This is the story of three young Salesian Brothers, from Poland, who have become pioneers in this great project – *Project Europe*. As part of their Salesian preparation for the priesthood and commitment to the Salesian way of life, they agreed to work, for a year or two, in a Salesian community in England. Jacek, Daniel and Dariusz volunteered for this with a certain amount of trepidation, but after many months in England they have no regrets. What were their fears or concerns as they embarked on this adventure? First of all, the language. Was their English good enough? Would they be able to understand



English as spoken by English children? They had heard that English is spoken differently in different parts of this small country. They had also heard rumours of *Cockney* and *Scouse*. They were assured that, when they arrived, they would be enrolled in a reputable language course.

One of the first principles of *Project Europe* is that the receiving Province must be prepared to take decisive steps to ensure that the visiting Salesians have every opportunity of learning the language of the host Province, and learning it well, preferably with a recognised qualification. We have a unique opportunity to offer them the chance to learn English. They are encouraged to make it clear to the members of their new community that they want to be corrected when they make mistakes in English. If the Salesians do not correct them, the children will.

All three Brothers now speak English very well and can appreciate the nuances of regional accents. At first, the youngsters in our schools took delight in correcting them, but now the Brothers have the confidence to spot the grammatical mistakes young people make and, with great satisfaction, can correct them.

Another fear the Brothers had, before they arrived, was the uncertainty of being able to cope in a country where there were so few Catholics. Poland is a very Catholic country, with strong Catholic traditions – priests can walk the streets in their cassocks, even everyday greetings can be religious in nature e.g. *Pochwalony Jezus Chrystus – Praised be Jesus Christ* to which the proper answer is *Na wieki wieków – For all eternity*. I don't think we can appreciate the comfort they feel living in a Catholic country. Needless to say, their fears were unfounded.

While they may still miss the way feast days are celebrated in their native Poland, they have appreciated the strong faith of so many Catholics in this country.

When a young Salesian comes to this country he needs someone who will befriend him, someone who will:

- Answer his questions
- Listen to his worries
- Spend some free time with him
- Enquire about his family and his previous way of life

Although each of the Brothers is based in a different community, working in a different parish and a different school, each one of them has found, in their communities, fellow Salesians who were only too happy to listen to them, offer them advice, spend time with them and genuinely encourage them. This interchange of ideas and concerns is vital in the process of *inculturation*. When we work in a different culture from our own we need to be open enough to appreciate the best things in that culture even if they are different from the culture of the country where we once lived. We need to appreciate the ways the Church has adapted to the culture of that country, even if it is different from the way the Church has developed in our own country. All three Brothers expressed genuine appreciation of the help they had received from teachers in the schools and parishioners in the parishes in which they worked. They really appreciated the way so many lay people had understood Don Bosco and taught them how to deal with young people in a Salesian way.

In talking to Jacek, Daniel and Dariusz, I asked what advice they would give to other Salesians who were thinking of coming to work in England. Apart from practical advice like, *Bring an umbrella*, they suggested the following:

*Be yourself, don't pretend to be a different person.
Speak English, even when you are not sure you are right.
Be prepared for the best experience of your life.*

Tony Bailey



Bitten with the Salesian Bug



The more I got involved with the Salesians the more alive I felt.

When I first met the Sisters in 2002 I had only been teaching for one year. I had been asked by a friend to join our Diocesan group travelling to Toronto, Canada for World Youth Day. Having had no previous experience of World Youth Day I had no idea of what to expect; if I am honest, I was more attracted by the thought of ten days in Canada than anything else! I certainly didn't expect my whole life to change. »

In the group that was travelling from Motherwell Diocese there were two Salesian Sisters (Sisters Bernadette and Isabel). I had never heard anything about the Salesians before and this was also my first dealing with *nuns*. The Sisters told me some things about their Congregation, their founders, Don Bosco and Mary Mazzarello, and about the type of work they did. I remember being fascinated by it all and asking lots of questions. I also remember being struck at how *normal* and approachable they were - I felt like I'd known them for ages!

When we were in Canada we attended a *Salesian Day*. People connected with the Salesian Family from all around the world gathered together. This was definitely a highlight for me because although the atmosphere was electric and I had an amazingly enjoyable day I discovered something much more - I finally found a name that described how I felt about people and things and my outlook on life and that name was *Salesian*. You could say that it was here that *I was bitten with the Salesian bug*.

After we returned home the Sisters kept in touch with me and I was invited to other Salesian events in this province. I got to know more of the Sisters and the young people who were involved with them. I remember the first time I went to Kendal for the Prayer Weekend and being struck by how welcoming everyone was and how much I felt at home.

The more I got involved with the Salesians the more alive I felt. I remember speaking to my friends just after World Youth Day and telling them all about my experience



and about these Salesians I had met. My friends were laughing and saying, *Oh, don't tell us you're going to be one of them.* Although I laughed too, something inside made my stomach flip and I remember hearing myself think, *Could that be for me?* However, as quickly as that came into my head I pushed it out, *No Way! That's not for me.*

I tried to suppress that feeling and thought for ages, for about two years I think. Each time it came I would push it further to the back of my mind and try my best to ignore it. However, it was stronger than me and each time it came back, it was much more forceful than before. Some of the Sisters asked me if I had ever considered Religious Life and I denied it so much. Although I was desperate for someone to ask me about it, I couldn't bring myself to talk about it when they did.

Then one day I received a letter inviting me to a Discernment Weekend in Newmains Pastoral Centre. I convinced myself that I was only going to help *make up the numbers* but deep down if I am honest I was hoping that if I went I'd discover that this wasn't for me and then I could get on with my life. As you can guess, that never happened. It was during this weekend that I realised I had to do something about this and talk to someone – I had tried to *deal with it myself*, but it wasn't any better.

So, after the weekend I emailed Sister Kathleen and asked if I could meet her for a chat. From that I began the *Accompaniment Programme* in which I met with her once every month and discussed lots of things from all different areas of my life.

During these months I continued to feel that God was calling me, in some way. I decided that unless I tried the next step I would never know, so I asked to make a *Community Experience*. I spent a year as part of the community in Newmains, whilst at the same time, continuing in my teaching post at the school I had always worked in. My experience of community in Newmains was fantastic, I very quickly felt at home there. The Sisters were all really welcoming and embraced me into the community. I never once felt like a visitor in their home,

I always felt part of everything. In that community I was the youngest member by almost 40 years but I never felt that it was an issue. Everyone reached out to one another – the sisters to me and me to them – and made the effort to highlight common interests and similarities as well as appreciating the differences.

As my *Community Experience* drew to a close I continued to feel that God was calling me to the Salesian Religious Life which meant I asked to become a *Postulant*. For a year I left Scotland and came to Liverpool. Once again, I was gifted with a wonderful experience of community and completely different experiences within mission. I also regularly attended Inter-Congregational Courses with people at the same stage as me from all different Orders. This was a fabulous experience as, apart from making lots of new friends, it showed that young people are still choosing Religious Life today. I am now at the stage where I am discerning my future and the next step of my journey. At the moment I feel certain that God is calling me to apply for entry into the Noviciate and as they say.....watch this space!

Anne Frances McNamee



See Salesian Sisters website <http://www.salesiansisters.org.uk/>

Teaching computing in the Solomon Islands

Angela and I are volunteer teachers from the UK of English and Computing who have been privileged to assist the Salesians of Don Bosco. »



Angela achieved a life-long dream when she retired, by going to work in underdeveloped countries, teaching English to underprivileged children. Her first assignment was in Ethiopia on the war-torn border with Eritrea. She loved working with children so much that she volunteered to go again, this time to Cambodia, again a country that had suffered terribly with thousands of orphaned children.

This is where I joined Angela as a teacher, and since then we have worked in East Timor, the Philippines, Ghana, and El Salvador. I had long since realised that children need the chance for an education, and deaf and hard of hearing students are no exception to this. The Don Bosco Technical Training Centre this weekend opened its doors to 27 deaf and hard of hearing students and their teachers from Aruligo.

After meeting Brother George and his students at the Marist Centre,

I was impressed by their signing abilities, and then thought about how to get them to communicate.

After a brief conversation with Fr Ambrose Pereira SDB, our Rector, the idea quickly grew that we could offer these boys and girls computer studies at our Centre, which would allow them to communicate with the outside world.

We have all been amazed at how quickly they have mastered computer skills. I see no reason why, long term, they could not be usefully employed in this computer-related age, as they are in my own country. Their artistic skills are astonishing; after but a few hours of lessons they were far ahead of many other students at this stage. This program will need financing for the longer term for it to succeed, but the long-term benefits to society will outweigh any costs incurred now. I would like to thank Sister Anna Maria Gervasoni FMA, Fr Ambrose Pereira SDB, the Salesians and all staff and students who gave up their weekend to help in this project. *Giving is far more rewarding than receiving.*

Leo Duffy,
Don Bosco Volunteer
GBR



It's a Mystery!

Hello Children,

What will happen in the future? It's a mystery! 40 years ago there were no computers: no mobile phones: and colour TV had only just been invented!

My story, in this magazine, has a ghost in it. There's a very famous mystery about a ghost ship called the Mary Celeste. It was found, in the Atlantic Ocean, with no-one on board. Stories in newspapers said a warm cup of tea and a bowl of apple pie were in the kitchen: a cat was asleep on top of a wardrobe: and washing was hung out to dry. What HAD happened?

There have been lots of answers to this mystery. I think it was a giant wave (Tsunami) that washed the crew into the sea.

Rio thinks pirates attacked the ship and threw the sailors overboard.

Suzi thinks it could have been a sea monster or an alien attack!

We just don't know. There are lots of mysteries that you can't find the answer to; but it is important to THINK about mysteries and to TRY to find the answer.

It can be fun to THINK about mysteries.

COMPETITION: SPRING 2009: We would like to thank the 50 children who sent entries. The winning entry was written by RYAN from St. Joseph's Primary School: Stanley, Co. Durham. His story is published below:

MONEY

Frankie (a rather artistic, smiley boy) was running home through a dark, rainy night. He was almost there when he skidded in a puddle and splashed his blonde hair with mud. However, a rectangular shape was sticking out of the bath of sludge. Frankie picked it up: it was a box. He pushed open the rusty metal lid. Right there was a load of coins and notes! He slammed it shut, grasped it and charged down the damp, dark streets. Eventually he approached his huge house.

Frankie wobbled in and screamed *I'm home!* He staggered upstairs to get dried and more importantly, to get changed. Once he had finished he went to see his mam and dad. Frankie showed his parents the box. His mother opened it.....and looked so happy; her eyes were gleaming. His parents immediately grabbed him and started kissing and cuddling their son. Frankie was amazed, but without thinking he snatched the box, ran to the kitchen bin, and threw the box away! His parents were screaming as soon as they noticed what he had done. Frankie just smiled and gave his Dad a hug; then he explained that when his parents were amazed at the money and gave him love, he realised that there is more to life than money. His parents realised what he meant. Love means more than money. Having him explain that, they forgot all about the box.

Money is not always important; your family is much more important than anything. Money may buy us food and drink and other supplies but you only need a little piece of money to buy food. You don't need any to get love from your family. Remember, money isn't everything.



WHO DONE IT?

HAUNTED HALL



Bosco, Rio, Suzi, Molly and Graham were spending the weekend in an old house called Haunted Hall.

The Ghost of Duke Edgar, who owned the Hall 200 years ago, was said to walk the corridors at night.

On arriving they went to their rooms to unpack.

Suddenly they heard Graham Greyhound shout out: *Come here quickly!*

Graham was staring at the desk near the front door.

I put some coins on here when I came in and they're gone.

Strange, said Bosco.

Look at this, exclaimed Molly! She pointed at the lock in the door.

I had the key for the door. I'm sure I left it in the lock and it's gone too!

This is getting spooky, shivered Suzi Squirrel. *What was that tale about a ghost?*

Leave it to me, said Rio. *I'm a bit of a detective you know.*

We need some clues. Fingerprints, footprints in the snow. That kind of thing.

It's Summer, Bosco pointed out! *Let's go to bed.*

THE GHOST:

Aaaaayy! The scream went all round Haunted Hall. Bosco, Molly and Graham ran out of their rooms onto the landing where Suzi stood terrified.

Aaaaayy; Aaaaayy, she yelled!

Calm down Suzi, said Bosco. *What's the matter?*

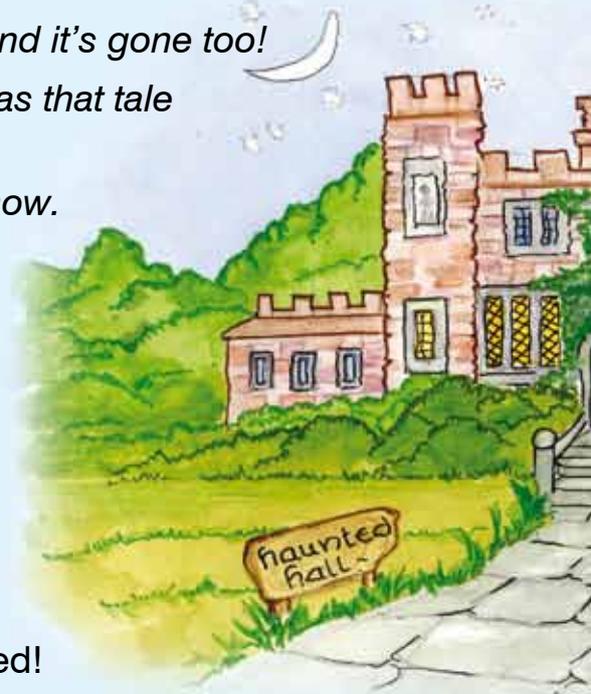
Th-th-the g-g-g-ghost, stammered Suzi. *It's gone into the bathroom.*

Follow me, said Bosco. One behind the other, they tiptoed to the door. THEN....it opened! And out came.....Rio! He had a white blanket over his head and body.

Ghostly Ghosts, exclaimed Bosco! *What on earth are you doing?*

It's cold, explained Rio. *So I wrapped a blanket around me!*

I think we can forget the Ghost of Haunted Hall for now, said Molly!



A BRIGHT IDEA!

It was breakfast on Saturday morning.

Conjuring cutlery, gasped Bosco.

My knife and spoon have gone.

Why would anyone want to steal a knife and spoon?

Thief, came a sudden shriek! Robber, came another shout!

What now? wondered Bosco.

My bracelet has gone, cried Suzi. So has my watch, complained Rio.

This is getting ridiculous; let's go outside and have a think, suggested Bosco.

It was a lovely, warm, summer's day. Bosco lay down on a bench and gazed up into the sky. The Sun shone in his eyes....it made him blink.... and as he blinked Bosco suddenly knew who the thief was!

DO YOU? (Answer on next page)

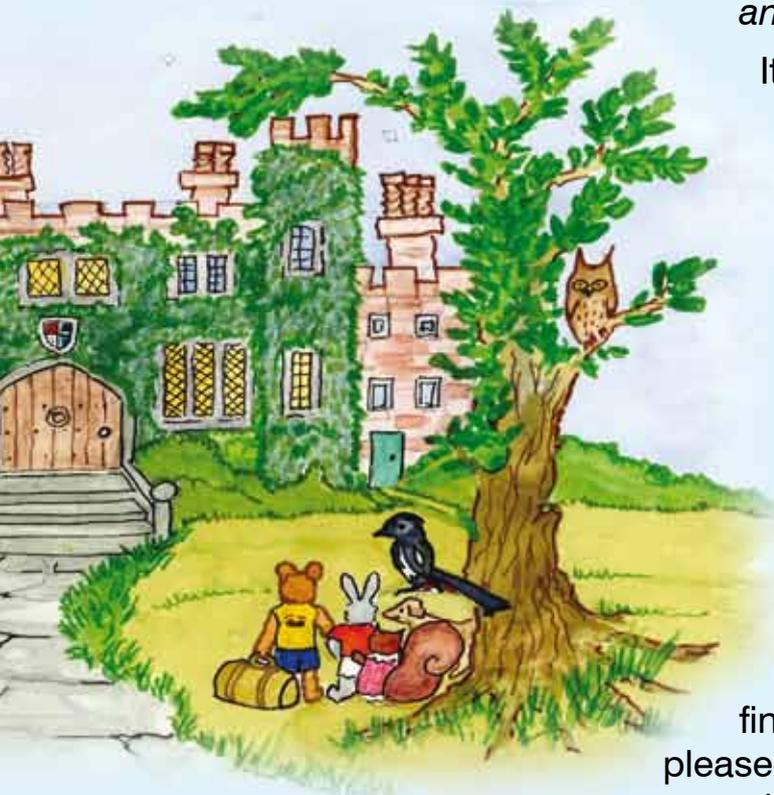
HONESTY PAYS

People like honest people. People do not like dishonest people. For example; if you find money on the floor at school the right thing to do is to hand it in to a teacher who will find out who it belongs to. Just think how pleased you would be if you lost some money and someone handed it in.

Stealing is always wrong: even being greedy and taking more than your fair share is wrong. If you are honest and fair other people will respect you. Even more important is that you get SELF-RESPECT which means that YOU know that you are an honest person and that's how you want to feel about yourself all through your life.

Another kind of honesty is to tell the truth and not to lie. If people think that you do not tell the truth they will not trust you and you will end up with fewer and fewer friends.

There are things that you know are right and things that you know are wrong. **DO WHAT YOU KNOW IS RIGHT!**



WHO DID IT?

Bosco got Rio, Suzi, Molly and Graham into a circle.

I've been thinking about everything that's been stolen, said Bosco. Coins, a key, a knife and spoon, jewellery and a watch; and I've just realised they have something in common. They're SHINY. And I know someone who can't help picking up shiny objects!

Oh, dear, oh dear, oh dear. I'm so sorry, said Molly Magpie I didn't mean to steal; honestly. Magpies just can't help picking up shiny objects. Let's go to my room and see if they're there.

And they were: in a drawer, under a mirror.

We forgive you, said Suzi. You're our best friend and we know you aren't a thief: but we'll keep an eye on you in future!

Thanks Inspector Bosco, smiled Molly. I didn't have a ghost of a chance of getting away with it!



COMPETITION: TRUE OR FALSE?

1.	Don Bosco's Christian name was John.	
2.	Agatha Christie wrote whodunits.	
3.	A <i>Tarantula</i> is a very large insect.	
4.	England is to the east of Wales.	
5.	King Henry VIII had 5 wives.	
6.	The Harry Potter stories are written by K J Rowling.	
7.	A year is the time it takes the Earth to travel around the Sun.	
8.	Barack Obama is the President of the USA.	
9.	The Salesians take their name from St Francis of Sales.	
10.	The word Internet is short for <i>International Network</i> .	
11.	The capital of Scotland is Glasgow.	
12.	The holders of the soccer World Cup are Italy.	
13.	The film <i>Slumdog Millionaire</i> is set in China.	
14.	The Queen has three sons and one daughter.	
15.	Gary Barlow writes the songs for <i>Take That</i> .	
16.	<i>Paella</i> is a popular Spanish meal.	
17.	There are more true answers than false answers in this quiz.	

Please send entries to Bosco Bear DON BOSCO PUBLICATIONS

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Please include Name, Age and Address

A New Kind of Piggy Bank



Kim Son is a district at the centre of the Province of Ninh Binh (Vietnam). The area covers 163 km². The economic situation is still precarious, and the zone belongs to the depressed part of the Province. »

The population counts 171,000 inhabitants with 39,000 families. 2,098 are poor families that earn their daily bread and the necessities of life through the cultivation of fields. Since the families are numerous, the land does not produce enough for all. For three years Sister Maddalena Ngo Minh Chau and other Sisters of her community have visited the poor families and help them through long distance adoptions that allow the children to attend school. Recently, considering the situation, the Salesian Sisters have sought and obtained financing to promote the raising of pigs (pork is the basic element for the Vietnamese people). Sister Maddalena had singled out the families available to begin the activity with the

help of micro-credit. Groups consisting of five poor families each have been established. Each family has made a written request for help and has promised to pay back the debt within 10 months. A person responsible who will distribute the money and receive the restitution has been appointed for each group. All is regulated by income. Thus began the activity and each family received a loan of three million *piastres* which is equivalent to 150 Euros for the acquisition of a sow. At the end of the 5th month it is expected that there will be the first piglets that can be sold. Then each family will give back half the sum received as a loan, 1,500,000 *piastres* equal to 75 Euros and the other half will serve to continue paying the expenses for the raising of the pigs and for the family. After ten months it is expected that the families will have paid back the whole loan. After about a year there will be another litter of piglets that the family could sell, keeping all the earnings.



The Salesians of South Africa Confront AIDS >>

A Salesian from South Africa explained the project as follows:

When the scope of the AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa caught the world's attention, many organisations sought to address the problem in a manner that they believed would help halt the spread of the disease. As one might expect, controversy and conflict has surrounded the decisions to use one program or another. The Salesians of South Africa at the Don Bosco Centre in Walkerville, 30 kms south of Johannesburg, developed a program called **Love Matters** to counteract some of the popular programs used to combat AIDS, believing that the Church needed to promote a program based on true love and commitment, not just convenience.

A Salesian from South Africa explained the project as follows:

I believe the safe-sex campaigns are doing little more than promoting sexual irresponsibility, by devaluing the meaning of the great gift of sex. The media have succeeded in brainwashing even many of church-going youth into believing, that as long as it is safe, promiscuity is not harmful. *Sex is only a sin if you don't use a condom*, declared one of them to me. Why can't anti-AIDS campaigners promote abstinence as aggressively and unconditionally as anti-smoking campaigners promote non-smoking? Is it really unrealistic to expect young people to say NO to sex before marriage? To me that reveals a very condescending attitude to the moral aptitude of young people. If we begin to present chastity as a heroic virtue again, or even just as cool, rather than as a far-fetched option for mad monks, they will strive for it. I've never met anyone who regretted waiting till marriage; I've met lots who wished they had.

While billboards and adverts advocate condoms as the secret weapon which will help us win the war against AIDS, a few of us have an alternative weapon to promote, which I believe is the only true solution even though it will never be popular. It begins with a radical choice for chastity. Be faithful if you are married; abstain if you're not. Why should I abstain or be faithful, if I'm told I can condomise and that it is safe! No condom is ever sold with a guarantee. At best they reduce the risk. But even if you don't fall pregnant or catch a nasty STD, you cannot protect your heart or mind with a condom. Safe sex still breaks hearts; it jeopardises one's emotional and spiritual health. If only our campaigns could bluntly

promote the fact that the safest sex is NO sex outside of a loving marriage commitment. I believe the time is long overdue for us to boldly promote chastity and make it fashionable by means of a Church-sponsored chastity campaign on a large scale. We need to challenge the youth of this country to set their ideals on the full truth, not half-truths. They do believe that sex is sacred; that chastity, not safe sex, is the path to health, happiness and holiness. That chastity safeguards friendships. That it enables you to kiss so many fears goodbye. It's the secret to remaining both healthy and holy. We've called our program **Love Matters**. We believe that if rates of infection among youth are slowing down ever so slightly, it is because of the abstinence-only message, that some more experienced educators are promoting. If only we were able to access just 1% of the money millions that safe-sex campaigns are getting, we could help stem the tide much quicker.

Post-Love Matters comments from Participants:

- This has been a very spiritual experience for me. I am an adopted child, and throughout my life so far I thought that my biological mother had just wanted to get rid of me and that she hated me. But this campaign has made me realise that I am worth something, and that she did love me enough to give me a life that she herself could not provide for me.
- My biological mom was 17 when she had me, unmarried and left in the lurch. I now appreciate that I was not a mistake. Sure, she made a bad decision and I was the consequence. But she redeemed herself by giving me life. Love Matters has helped me think a lot about my purpose in life and I have taken decisions to strive to make something worthwhile of this gift of life. I hope to meet my biological mom one day, and this camp has made me more determined to do that.
- My father died when I was 8 and again this camp has helped me move on and stop feeling sorry for myself.

Parishes are focusing on the needs of couples and families and celebrating the greatness of marriage, with a campaign called: *Making Marriage More*. We rejoice at this initiative, considering that we add our bit through the **Love Matters** program which has a component on marriage and building family-life, but which especially is to be seen as a *remote preparation for marriage* program.



We've called our program **Love Matters.**

Postscript

The 53rd Commission on the Status of Women, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York March 3rd - 13th this year, was an opportunity for several branches of the Salesian Family to collaborate with NGOs and governments to address this year's priority theme: *The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care giving, in the context of HIV/AIDS*. The Salesian Sisters, the Salesians of Don Bosco, lay collaborators, and students, all participated in and contributed to the deliberations of the Commission.

A number of people thanked the Salesian Family for their intervention and were appreciative of their decision to deliver it using both a male and a female speaker. Our major collaborative effort was the presentation of the Salesian Project from South Africa – *Love Matters*.

Our Responsibility for the Rights of a Child

The Salesian Family has no reason for being, other than *for the salvation of the young*, in all the meanings of the word *salvation*.



The Salesian Family has contact with 15 million boys and girls in 130 countries around the world »

We have a unique geographical and cultural presence, responsible for the education of so many young people. We acknowledge this with humility, but also with awareness. We are talking of a precious heritage: a heritage that carries a huge responsibility. Through the Gospel of Jesus and the charisma of Don Bosco, we must attempt to transform society by removing the deep causes of injustice and poverty. By evangelisation we must enable the growth of the child, in all his or her dignity; especially the poorest child.

Like Don Bosco, in his time, we must be active agents of a child's salvation. Don Bosco asks us today to put the *child at the centre*, as the ongoing choice in the life of every one of our communities. This is why, for the complete salvation of the young, the Gospel asks us today to set out on this path of **the rights of the child**. This means treading a new path and learning new languages. We must leave nothing untried for the salvation of the young. Today we cannot look into the eyes of a child without seeing ourselves as the promoters of that child's rights.

The Centrality of the Quality of Education

Only education can promote a new world, where every child can live a free and dignified life, in peace. We are faced with an *educational crisis* caused by so many inequalities, faced by an education so often determined by *market forces*. These forces serve to maintain the status quo, privatise wealth and cause all kinds of poverty. As a result, together with young people and their families, we are called to examine the quality

of the education we offer. Does it have the capacity to bring young people to a mature appreciation of universal values? Values such as respect, the fostering of the dignity of the human being, personal and social responsibility for justice and solidarity, active citizenship. We need to examine the capacity of our education to communicate the Gospel and bring young people to encounter Jesus, as part of an education which frees them from all forms of poverty and marginalisation. We are called to scrutinise our capacity to give full expression, in our Salesian communities and in our educative and pastoral communities, to values which promote the dignity of the human person, not only through our teaching but also through our witness. This kind of scrutiny and evaluation will, as a consequence, lead us to put certain choices into practice, which are deeply Salesian; in particular it will ask us:

- To renew our choice of starting from *those who are the least* in any Salesian work.
- To educate to awareness of human rights in all our works and activities: schools, technical and professional formation centres, universities, oratories and youth centres, parishes, and associations. Works that are not directly concerned with hardship and marginalisation can and must also educate to and for human rights. Human rights will help change the *status quo*, power structures, dominant life styles, consumer patterns; that are a powerful means at our disposition for promoting and protecting the young who are more at risk, weak or in need.



- To renew our choice for a *complete education*, where education and evangelisation are like two sides of the same coin. Holistic education of this kind means educating young people to social and political involvement following the inspiration of the Church's Social Teaching.

Our Educational System and Human Rights

without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status. (Article 2 of Convention on the Rights of the Child)

In the same way, *Human Rights* offer to the preventive system new frontiers and opportunities for dialogue and networking with other bodies with a view to identifying and removing the causes of injustice, iniquity and violence. Don Bosco could not speak of the *Human Rights*, because that legal category did not then exist. But Don Bosco was a precursor of so many of the elements in a view of the child and adolescent which is today defined by the language of *Human Rights*.

Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva

I conclude with a short poem by Gabriella Mistral, short but full of prophetic meaning, and which tells us why today, more than ever, we should speak of an *educational emergency* and how today more than ever the way forward can be found in the heart of Don Bosco:

His Name is Today

We are guilty of many errors, of many faults,
But our worst crime is abandoning the children,
Neglecting the fountain of life.

Many of the things we need can wait.
The child cannot.

Right now is the time his bones are being formed,
His blood is being made and his senses are being developed.

To him we cannot answer, Tomorrow.
His name is Today.



Gabriella Mistral

Nobel Prize-winning poet from Chile





A vast movement for the young »

Speaking of the *Salesian Family* today is to describe a certain sense of citizenship. The expression *Salesian Family* is not found in Don Bosco's terminology, but it was present in his heart and in the spirit of everything he did. There can be no doubt that for our Father the centre and purpose of his whole life was the mission received from God which he saw taking shape more and more clearly following his dream at nine years of age. The conviction of his vocation did not dispense him from the obligation, which at times was difficult and painful, of discerning the path it was to take and discovering the means to put it into practice.

The March Of The Laity



The various activities and work of Don Bosco, including the founding of his Congregation, and with Mary Mazzarello, that of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were not ends in themselves, but ways of carrying out the mission. Describing the charism as *Salesian* indicates a spirit and a style of action inspired by the loving kindness of Saint Francis of Sales. It is possible to think of a movement as formed by concentric circles at the centre of which is the animating *nucleus* which is the FMA and the SDB consecrated religious. Certainly the tiny seed has become a large tree and now a wood. In the 2009 Strenna I expressed the very practical form of our mission in this way: **Let us commit ourselves to making the Salesian Family a vast movement of persons for the salvation of the young.**

We are Family »

We are not a *work group* but a family which lives in *communion* and has a *mission*, like a heart that beats with a double rhythm, the systolic and the diastolic, the two alternatives which cannot be separated without losing their identity. The mission reminds us that it is not a question of just *being together* as on Mount Tabor, but of working *in harmony* for the education and the evangelisation of the young. The clearest example of this union is to be found in the Past Pupils Association. The Salesian Constitutions say that they *are also members of the Salesian Family by reason of the education they have received (Constitution 5)*. No one who has been in one of our houses or centres can be rejected, something unthinkable in a family. *The bonds are closer when they commit themselves to take an active part in the Salesian mission in the world:* in a family the collaboration of everyone in the common mission is no small matter. The word *movement* underlines the dynamism of the mission and recalls the passage in the gospel which describes Jesus walking towards Emmaus with two disciples. For us the disciples are the young. We are called to accompany them to Jesus, the only one who can give meaning to their lives.

All of this we are doing in the much wider perspective of the universal

Church, and in more practical terms within the local Church. Saint Francis of Sales was considered an innovator when he presented holiness as the aim of every Christian. Don Bosco puts the emphasis on the right/duty of collaborating in the Church according to the Salesian charism. The Second Vatican Council highlighted the apostolate of the laity and the vocation to holiness. Indeed as Leon Bloy wrote, *Every Christian is either an apostle or an apostate!* The lay people who share with us the Salesian mission and spirit are not merely collaborators but people who are co-responsible, even if on different levels.

Nowadays a great variety of groups and associations for voluntary service have developed; this situation is a new way of being aware of others, a challenge to confront the dominant injustices and selfishness of people, a significant vocational option and the complement of the educational process. Voluntary service continues to expand in some regions; local and national service, missionary, social and vocational service is developing, especially in America. In other countries international and missionary voluntary service has developed e.g. in Europe; while others are welcoming volunteers e.g. Africa and Asia. Salesian voluntary service is a well-worthwhile opportunity for young people who have been involved in pursuing the youth ministry process, as it helps them to make mature decisions about their option for a committed Christian life. It often becomes the occasion to make contact with and provide evangelisation opportunities for young people outside our own centres. In the end, what matters is the salvation of youth.

by Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva SDB



To you, Father, our praise is due
for Don Bosco
the dream that inspired him
the trials that tempered him
and the signs that guided him;
for those who have shared
his indomitable zeal
men and women,
religious and lay,
in every time and place;
for the humble beginnings
at Valdocco
and for every educative
environment called
to be a revelation
and gift of your love;
for the immense ranks of
young people
who invade our life
and disturb our heart
prompting it to imitate
that of the Good Shepherd.

To you, Father, our praise is due
with Mary
our powerful Helper
in the Holy Spirit
through the Risen Christ.
Amen.

