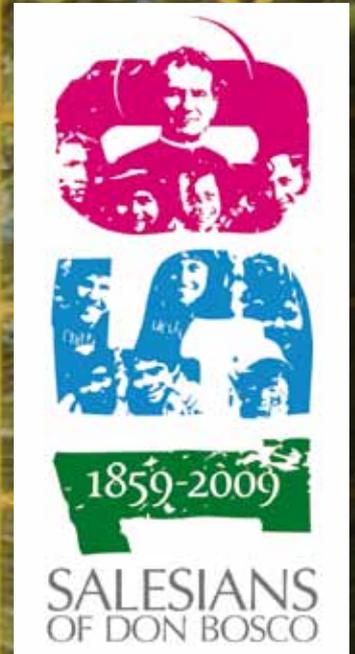
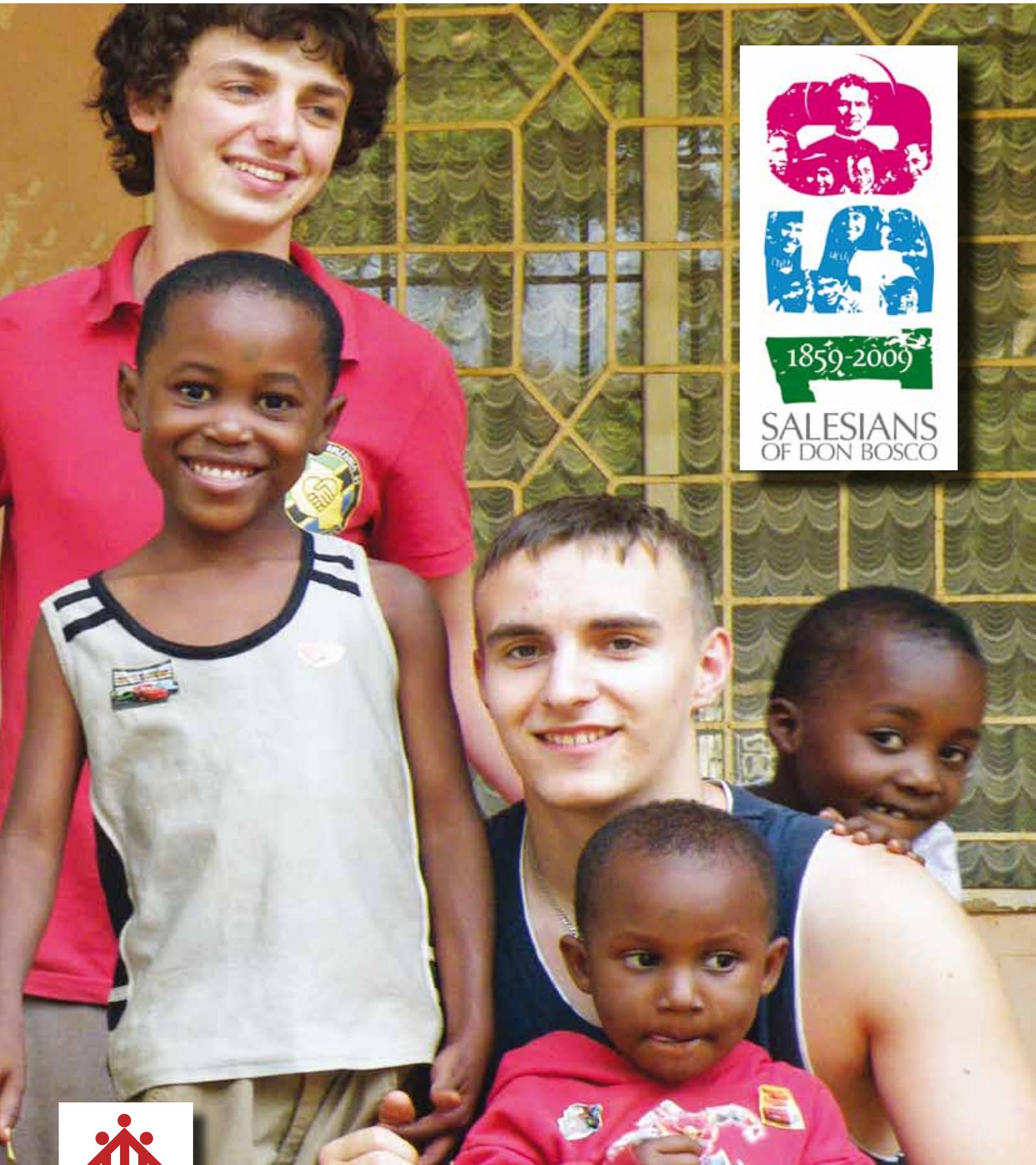




THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SALESIAN FAMILY

DON BOSCO TODAY



DON BOSCO

THE SALESIAN BULLETIN • YEAR 117 • ISSUE 3 • AUTUMN 2009

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Coinciding with the 150th anniversary of the Founding of the Salesian Congregation, this year's missionary expedition has a particular significance for us.



Editorial >>

On the 18th December this year, we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Salesians by Don Bosco in 1859. One of those first Salesians was John Cagliero who became a great Salesian missionary.

This edition of *Don Bosco Today* has a distinct missionary flavour; even Bosco Bear has ventured far afield and appreciated the joys of Africa, meeting the exotic animals of that continent. However the new reality is that we don't need to go abroad to find missionary territory; for our own country is now missionary territory - in need of evangelisation. As Fr Chavez reminds us *Christianity is not a label, but a way of life*.

Where do we begin? The article entitled *Zongo Therapy* suggests an answer to this question; it ends with the significant words *Begin with the young. This is the characteristic feature of the Salesian missionary approach*.

Reading through the articles in this magazine, I am sure you will notice how the young people who volunteer to help in our Salesian works in other countries benefit so

much from the experience. Although the children they meet may lack so many of what are regarded as the modern *necessities* of life, they are richer in so many other ways and their cheerfulness is contagious.

Our Salesian way of working must always be the way of welcome, accepting young people as they are; where they are; in the hope of travelling with them in community, as Jesus did on the road to Emmaus. Our Salesian Sisters have just celebrated 50 years in Liverpool; imagine how many families have felt the benefit of their friendship and the education they have provided over those years.

On the 3rd October, at a meeting of teachers from our Salesian schools, we launched a new kind of prayer book for young people. We have called it *Swatch&Pray* since the format is a *swatch* of 60 reflections and prayers. We are hoping that this will be more than just a gimmick and will help young people reflect on their lives prayerfully.

Should you have a friend who you know would like to receive a copy of *Don Bosco Today* by post, please email their address to joyce@salesians.org.uk. Finally, may I thank you all for your support and generosity, your Salesian kindness does so much good.

Tony Bailey SDB

a.bailey@salesians.org.uk



16-17 Zongo Therapy

Sunyani is not the biggest city in Ghana, just 60,000 inhabitants. It is in the middle of Ghana, a crossroads city, with all the problems of immigration and emigration.

18-19 Bolton to Tanzania

For ten students from Year 13 and three staff, this was an opportunity to reflect together on experiences and share some lasting impressions of Africa, during our simple evening prayer.

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It all began with a letter from a friend to a friend



50th Anniversary of the Salesian Sisters work in Liverpool 1959 – 2009

Sister Pauline, Sister. Teresa, Sister Mary, Sister Winifred, Sister Kathleen

In the early spring of 1959, Sister Winifred, then a novice, received a letter from her friend Pauline O'Donoghue saying that her parish priest was looking for some sisters to work in the schools in his parish, St Swithin's, Croxteth, Liverpool. He wanted Sisters who would not only teach the children, but take care of them after school. The request was quickly answered by Sister Anne Ivaldi, the novice mistress, and in true Salesian fashion things began to move. By the 6th September 1959 four sisters were on the train to Liverpool to start a new mission in Croxteth, the Sisters were Mary Dyer, Teresa Frost, Mary Cairns and Winifred Acred, the latter two had been professed just one month before. The sisters arrived at 10.45 pm in Lime Street Station to be met by Fr Kane and were taken to Newsham Drive to the Sisters of the Infant Jesus who had offered hospitality until the little community could find a suitable house nearer their mission in Croxteth. By 9 am the next morning they were facing a very amazed Miss Egan, the headteacher of the primary school. She had been told that four teachers would arrive but she had not expected four nuns in full habits!

The first day was exciting and very busy as there was no previous planning. Each classroom had low cupboards with sliding doors, when one of the sisters slid back a cupboard door everything tumbled out exercise books, scissors, and paper. On top of all this, landed a small plastic shrine with a picture of Mary Help of Christians. They felt that this was a sign Our Lady was with them in this new venture.

The first weeks had all the excitement of a new mission. The new superior, Sister Nelly Paintin, arrived in Birkenhead having travelled the long way round from Hastings to save a few pounds!

Eventually the sisters moved into their new house which had previously belonged to the headteacher, Miss Egan. They had no furniture, except the little bits Miss Egan had left. They had one chair each which they moved around from room to room. Fortunately Fr Kelly came with a stack of chairs, which saved them from a lot of hassle. On Sunday 8th November they began



the Sunday Club, 169 children attended. The following Sunday 221 children attended. By the third Sunday we had 300 young people, all in the Parish Club. The ages ranged from five years to seventeen years.

The house chronicle records that, in March 1960, the first mention was made of a Grammar School for girls at a meeting with the Provincial and Archbishop Heenan. The Archbishop said he would be delighted to have the Salesian Sisters running the school which he had had in mind for some time. There were to be many more meetings and discussions before the completion of the project. On the 3rd September 1965 the new school, under the patronage of Mary Help of Christians opened. Although the building was not completed, both pupils and staff had to travel across the city to another building!

With new Sisters arriving to teach in the High School, the original house became too small and the community divided. The Sisters teaching in the High School sleeping in the school building until their new house was ready. They had to remove all trace of their beds and belongings before the girls arrived in the morning. The feast of Mary Help of Christians, 1966, saw the formal blessing and opening of the High School which included a purpose-built youth club.

December 1973 saw the school hit by a tragedy when a false bomb alert caused the pupils to vacate the building and assemble on the playground. In the process, Sister Aileen the headteacher had a heart attack on the playground and died.

With a rise in vocations the Sisters negotiated the purchase of the Bridgidine Convent in 1978, as a house of formation for aspirants and postulants. By 1980 the first postulants went to Italy for the noviciate. The Sisters in St Swithin's parish, while still teaching in the primary school, ran after-school clubs and groups for parents, always supported by a thriving group of co-operators. The community celebrated the centenary of the death of Don Bosco with over 300 young people in the convent followed by a Mass celebrated by Bishop Kevin O'Connor.

As times changed, there was sadly a decrease in the number of Sisters available for the work, so after a time of discernment in 1991 the Sisters sold the house to the Redemptoristines and joined the community of Mary Help of Christians attached to the High School. Now

there was just one community in the area, however the Sisters continued to teach in St Swithin's and work with the co-operators.

The convent, built in the 60s, needed costly repairs and a new estate was being built around the house. The decision was made to build a new convent on the front lawn and demolish the old house selling the cleared land. April 2000 saw the opening of the new modern house in Mansion Drive built in the same style as the new estate. The new house includes offices and meeting rooms for our charity (VIDES UK) which is part of the international volunteer movement of the Salesian Sisters. This means that the house is truly an open house to young people. Most weekends the rooms are full of young people working on projects for youth-to-youth ministry. Also this year saw the work expanding to Toxteth and Edge Hill with a Sister being appointed as pastoral worker to develop the sacramental programmes with the children and parents, while another Sister helps at the asylum women's group in this area.

Today 2009 the future is bright as we continue working with and training our young people and co-workers for leadership in the Salesian mission, passing on the gift of our Salesian Charism.

Finally I quote from Fr David O' Malley's homily at the Celebration Mass of Thanksgiving:

The early pioneers were not builders of bricks and mortar but builders of people. They were women who were interested in affection before architecture they began to write a story of Salesian love for young people.

There have been many changes in Croxteth but love remains, because it is built on friendship with God and God is love.

Sister Winifred Acred FMA

Life after Pasil

My aim - to make sure they know that I love and value them



One of the greatest things about volunteering with Bosco Volunteer Action (BOVA) is the training that you undertake before commencing your volunteer experience. I feel that I learned more in those weekends than in years of education. The training was enjoyable, informative, and stimulating. It encouraged you to think deeply and critically about issues of poverty, religion, culture, and of your motives for wanting to volunteer abroad. »

The latter I found to be extremely helpful since I was unsure of my own motives, perhaps guilty that part of it was selfishness. I'd seen adverts from gap-year organisations who offered experiences abroad with comments from ex-volunteers exclaiming - *It was the best time of my life, excellent for my CV.* I struggled with the idea that I could benefit from other people's misfortune. BOVA helped me address these issues and I managed to accept that, as a short-term volunteer, the main beneficiary of the experience would be me. I believe it. Whatever good I did in the Philippines, whatever happiness or expertise I brought to people's lives there, I benefited from it far more than they did. BOVA doesn't allow you to just do the volunteering and then return home it helps you see the volunteer experience as a stimulus for on-going involvement in development issues.

But how? One plane-ride back and you are flung into a world far removed from desperate poverty. Upon arrival home I felt like an alien in my own home town. My head was full of images that didn't make sense to me in England. As time passes I sometimes wonder whether it was all a dream; it just seems so very far away. The difficulty comes when trying to readapt to fit in with our own culture, without forgetting Pasil, in the Philippines. Indeed, after my initial culture shock on returning home, I began to fall back into old habits. I spent £25 on a night-out and after converting it into Pesos the next day; I was devastated knowing how far that money would go in Pasil. That's when I realised that in this rich culture in which we live I will have to *force* myself to understand the value of my money. Over time I have been able to accept this, but remembering Pasil I have a strong determination to serve them and others throughout my life.

I am certain that I will one day return to work abroad in areas where my teaching expertise could be of a real benefit to poor, uneducated children. Even here in England, where I teach at Primary School level, I have undertaken sessions with pupils aged 8-10 years of age on development issues. It has certainly been encouraging to see how engaged the children were, and the sessions evoked some thoughtful discussions and high-quality work. I have been able to draw links between the small things that children are currently doing - such as *Walk to School Days* - and poverty. Teaching in England is



important and although I do not feel that the children fully recognise the value of their education, I know that I cannot blame them for that. The children I now teach are still important to me and I make it my aim to make sure they know that I love and value them, in the spirit of Don Bosco. Although I can see myself, perhaps, veering away from direct classroom teaching at some point, as long as I am a teacher I will always wrestle with options of where and who to teach. Who needs me most? Who should I help most? Does charity begin at home?

Recently I have been talking about my experiences to adults from churches in Truro. While preparing for this I became conscious that the photos, I was choosing, concentrated on the poverty in Pasil. I wondered whether this was unfair to the friends that I made there. The Filipinos I met all had pride; they were proud of their country. They never moaned about their living conditions or that they had very little to eat that day. I realised that this is the message that I wanted to bring home to people here. It suddenly became clear to me that what I wanted to say was that although they look to us, as a developed country, for financial help or for support and expertise regarding how they can develop, we should by no means consider ourselves superior to them. In fact, the respect they instantly bestowed upon me as a white westerner was not earned. It is my opinion that we should be looking to them and learning from them how to live because they were so grateful and so happy with everything that they had. Instead of looking at what they didn't have, they were always thankful for the little that they did. Here in England we are hideously spoilt – even those living in impoverished areas have rights to health care, social care and education, systems that without the aid of the church or charities are almost non-existent in areas of poverty in the Philippines and other places throughout the world.

Certainly, the people of Pasil had a great sense of fun and of life; always laughing, always smiling. God's presence warmed them, and in turn they warmed those around them. They were proud of anything they achieved and that's why Don Bosco's existence in Pasil was so wonderful, because the children and youth took such pride in their responsibilities within the centre, it gave them a role, an opportunity to be someone.

I had so much fun in my three months there. I laughed every day. And that was because of the people and their sparkling eyes and joyful spirit. They had small

dirty houses, lack of a good diet, and few possessions, but they were so rich in other ways: They say *Salamat - Thank You* – all the time.

My whole sense of appreciation has changed because of my experience in the Pasil. I went saying thank you, and returned saying *Salamat*. For me, *Salamat* holds a greater meaning than thank you, because I saw it used so generously by people who have so little. It represents to me the big hearts of people I met and I will be forever thankful to them for welcoming me into their lives for that short period of time. It was in Pasil that I realised how thankful I am for the freedom and opportunities that we have here in England. For it's not just that I have so much - a big house, food, bed, clothes, games at my disposal – all these things that they didn't have – it is also the richness of opportunities that we have on our doorstep, including the chance to visit other countries, like theirs.

I have changed my life since returning to England, in little ways. I give clothes to charity shops and buy clothes there. I have raised some money and have plans to raise more. I am raising awareness through education. Most of all, I make sure that I am learning from their example. I can't eat food now without being aware that I am lucky that I can be doing that whenever I like. Thank you. I can't spend money now without being aware that I have money to spend. Thank you. I can't visit another country without remembering that some people live in the same small street all their lives, not because they want to, but because there is no way out.

And every day I remember the smiles of my friends in Pasil. Thank you. I am humbled by your love.

Kat Cousins – BOVA volunteer in the Philippines

www.boscovolunteeration.co.uk

I escaped from Czechoslovakia to be a missionary

On August 21st, 1984, as a young Salesian I crossed the Alps between Yugoslavia and Italy, so I could contribute to Project Africa. »



It was an adventure that marked out my missionary vocation. It took two years to plan this flight from a communist country – Czechoslovakia, to Italy – so I could set out as a missionary. Now 25 years after this exodus I can share my story with you. Back in 1982 a priest was giving a talk to us young Salesians on the missionary vocation; his words changed my entire life. Following his words I could not sleep. The challenge was a simple one, *What a pity, that over the past 25 years, no Salesian from the Prague Province had left for the missions!* The Lord had given me the three basic and essential qualities of a good missionary:

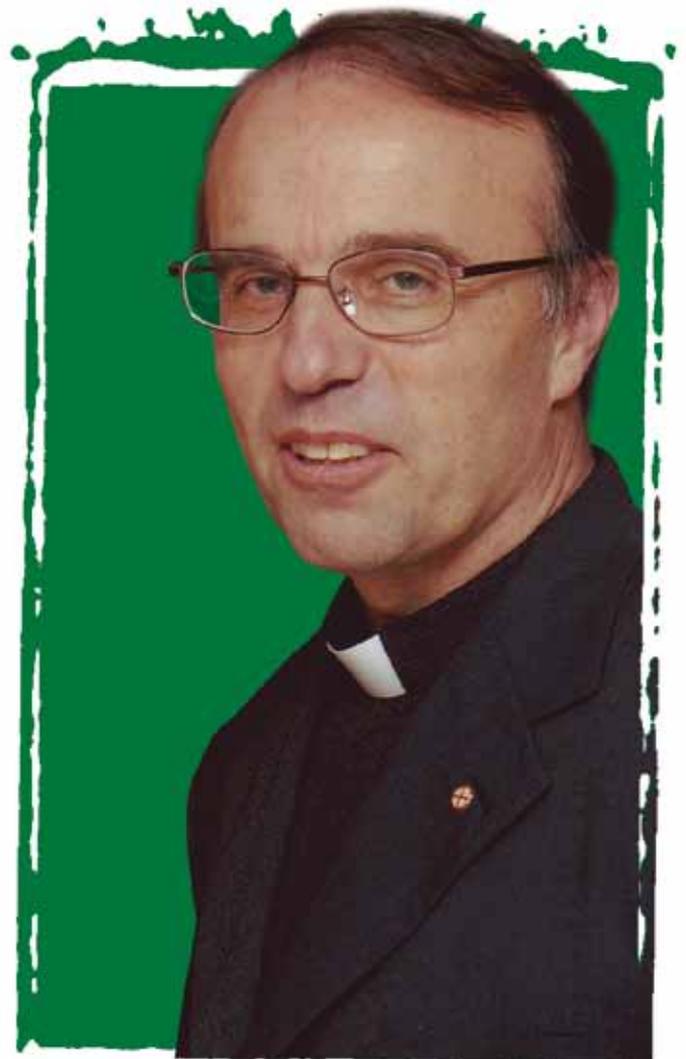
- Good health.
- A facility in learning languages.
- A passion to share my faith with non-Christians.

In August 1984 it took two days by bus, as a tourist, from Prague to the Adriatic coast at Istria, one day of walking in the direction of the mountains, without documents and towards the borders with Italy; a night climb up the mountains accompanied by a Salesian Cooperator then across the mountains to Trieste. Without a passport and with just a small bag, a few summer clothes and a single book – the New Testament – I left everything behind. I had, for safety reasons, left without telling my parents friends, even other Salesians.

Although my original dream was to go to Africa, and my superiors sent me to South Korea, my overall life direction did not change – I wanted to be a missionary. From those first moments in Italy, then during my life as a missionary in Korea I always found it relatively easy to find the energy and enthusiasm amidst difficulties and zeal for apostolic work. Only many years later did I come to understand that leaving everything behind brought me ever closer to the souls of the young, to walk patiently

and perseveringly with them. Missionary life, complete self-giving, joyfully bringing the Gospel to the young even to the ends of the earth – this helps us to put up with fatigue, helps us act without being so much aware of so many sacrifices. I thank the Lord for his call to the missions. Let us ask the Lord that many Salesians can experience this vocation joyfully!

Fr Václav Klement SDB
Councillor for Salesian Missions - Rome



The Bear Facts



Hello Children,

In this autumn story, my friends and I visit Africa to do some voluntary work during our holidays. Suzi thinks that the African jungle is dangerous and full of wild animals. Molly thinks it will be a great adventure. Rio is worried that we'll get lost in the jungle! But all we really want to do is help in Africa.

Africa seems a long way off, but we all travel about 4 million miles every day. It's true. Because the Earth is whizzing around the Sun and never stops. This is a very important reason why we should all help one another. We are all on Earth together so we need to look after this planet of ours. Molly often says that if anything bad happens to the Earth we are in BIG trouble.

I'd love to be an astronaut and be able to see the Earth from Space. I've seen pictures of this really beautiful blue and white *ball*, floating in the air, where we all live.

Go to the library and find out about the Earth.
Where is it? Where are we?



SUMMER COMPETITION 2009

SUMMER COMPETITION - ANSWERS

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

The winner of this competition is Matthew Shaw, aged 7, from Oldham.
He will receive a copy of the game *Remember Your Saints*

Bosco Bear



UNDER AFRICA



Bosco and his friends Molly, Rio and Suzi were doing voluntary work during their summer holidays, in the village of Tappita in Tanzania in East Africa. Bosco's cousin Basil Baboon lived there.

I'm not very happy, said Suzi Squirrel.

Why ever not, asked Bosco

It's too hot and nothing works. There are no lights, no running water and there are lots of creepy crawlies like lizards, scorpions and giant beetles. And...have you had a bucket bath?

What's that, asked her friend?

It's when the showers don't work they bring a bucket of water and throw it over you, said a grumpy Suzi!

Rio was worried about food.

What's for dinner, snake and kidney pie?

Upendo, Basil's wife, said We usually have maize porridge for starters and then kidney beans with gravy and then an orange.

Have you any chips? asked Rio, hopefully.



THE SCHOOL:

All of the volunteers and 400 children were helping to build a new school in the village.

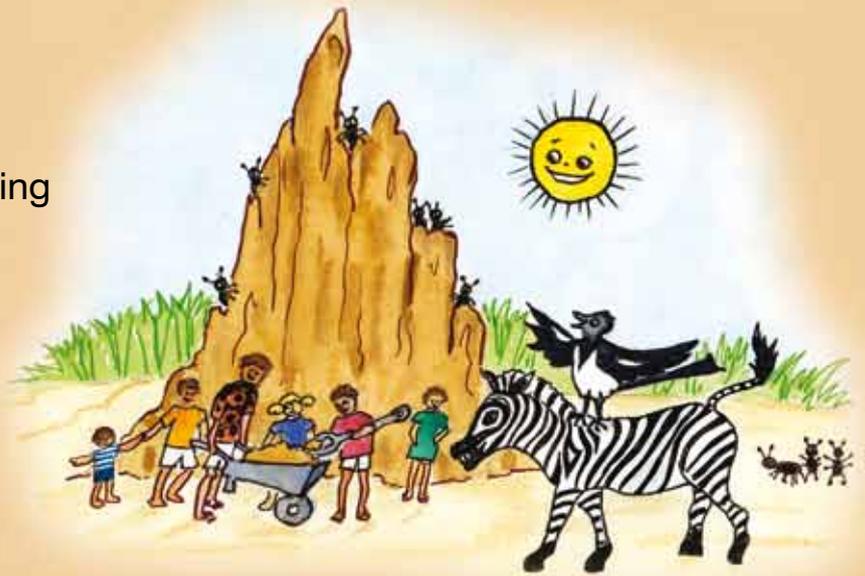
Molly, can you help me, asked Zawardi Zebra?

Zawardi led Molly to an ant-hill. They joined lots of people collecting mud and dirt and shovelling it into wheelbarrows, which they

CAN SKIES

pushed to a huge trench for the foundations. They tipped everything in. Zawardi said it would dry like concrete. To clean themselves everyone just jumped into a stream!

Meanwhile Bosco, Suzi and Rio were collecting huge palm leaves to make a roof.



KICKBALL:

In the evening, Rachel Rhino asked Bosco and his friends if they would like a game of kickball.

What's that, asked Bosco?

It's like rounders and football together, Rachel replied. *You put 4 sticks in the ground as bases. Then the bowler rolls a ball along the ground and the batter kicks it and runs round the bases.*

They played till it was dark. Nobody knew the score: it didn't seem to matter.

That was great fun, smiled Molly.

Two weeks soon passed.

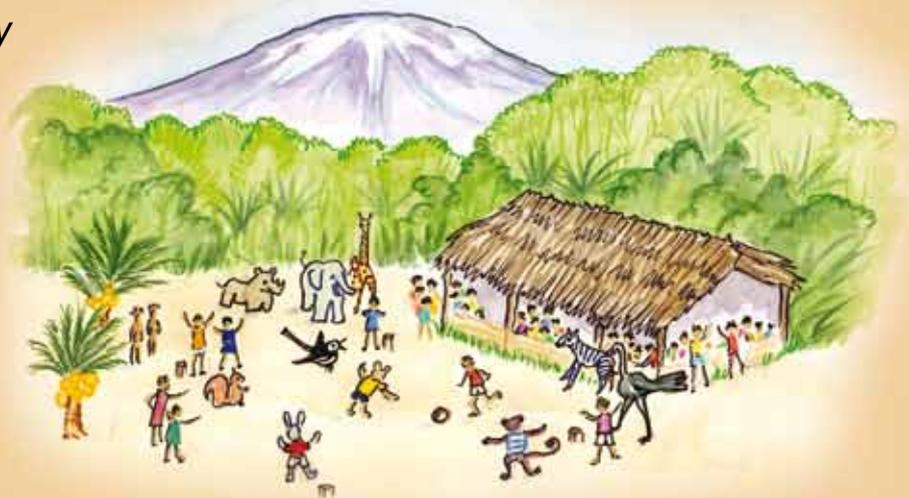
I don't want to go home, said Suzi.

Why ever not? asked Bosco.

Everyone is so happy and they make us happy too. They are so pleased to see us, making us so welcome. They can't wait for the school

to be built and everyone is looking

forward to starting at their new school. The scenery is fantastic, you can see snow on the top of Mount Kilimanjaro. It is such a beautiful country. I love it here.



WE ARE ALL AFRICANS

Scientists are now almost sure that the first human beings lived in Africa. Skeletons have been found from about 200,000 years ago in Kenya, Tanzania (where my story is set) and Ethiopia.

About 60,000 years ago some Africans travelled north to live in what is now Europe, where we live today. If scientists are right then we can trace our ancestors back to Africa. I see many T-shirts, posters, and flags that say **We are all Africans**. I like it. It makes us think about ourselves and other people.

Which matters most? Where we come from or how we behave? Of course, most people want to look nice: but it's even more important to BE nice. Are you kind, hard-working, loving, friendly, and honest? This is about your PERSONALITY; your CHARACTER. You should decide if you like someone after you've talked to them and got to know them: not just by looking at them.

DISCOVERING AFRICA: WORD SEARCH

B	I	T	Q	L	W	A	K	S	Y	H	S
O	U	B	D	E	S	E	R	T	J	M	A
H	B	K	V	F	S	N	G	F	V	Z	F
E	X	P	S	E	S	K	A	C	C	R	A
Q	T	N	B	G	Q	E	U	K	X	T	R
U	N	I	O	J	U	N	G	L	E	U	I
A	R	L	P	R	S	Y	B	N	H	N	F
T	L	E	A	U	H	A	Z	O	G	O	M
O	C	E	K	E	L	D	T	I	Q	C	J
R	P	W	A	U	X	C	M	L	J	O	U
S	T	T	A	N	Z	A	N	I	A	C	D

Find 15 words (up, down, across or diagonal) that are associated with Africa.

1 _____	6 _____	11 _____
2 _____	7 _____	12 _____
3 _____	8 _____	13 _____
4 _____	9 _____	14 _____
5 _____	10 _____	15 _____

Please send entries to **Bosco Bear DON BOSCO PUBLICATIONS**

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Please include Name, Age and Address



Simple activities and reflections and prayers for young people. It brings together the Church traditions of praying with the body and with the heart. The prayers are designed to be used during the day in large groups, small groups or individually. The swatch can be given to an individual to choose a prayer or the leader may select an appropriate prayer for that day.

NEW

Prayers
... an inner
... hold all
... and

Lord
Every day I see litter blowing around my neighbourhood, spoiling the life and health of our world. Every day people throw rubbish at each other in their conversation, dumping feelings and thoughts on each other that can spoil friendships. Lord, help me to collect my rubbish and take it home. Help me to empty my memory each day of all that litters my mind and heart. Help me to sleep with clean hands and a pure heart each night.
AMEN

Lord
Many of us start our day on a bus to school or work. Crowded together we share a journey. Help us to use the chances a bus can offer to make new friends, to tolerate rowdy behaviour or to find a silent moment to think of you living at the heart of every passenger.
AMEN

Lord
Thank you for this new day. May I enjoy moving through this busy day, but also dip into the pools of silence inside me, where you wait to listen and speak to my heart. Make me a pool of silence for those who need to speak to me. May I hear your presence in their words, and in my own stillness, today and always.
AMEN

Swatch & Pray
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140th Salesian Missionary Cross »



In the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, in Turin, from where Don Bosco, on 11th November 1875, sent the first group of missionaries to Patagonia, in South America, the Rector Major Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, with Mother Yvonne Reungoat, Superior General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, at his side, gave the missionary cross to the members of the 140th Salesian missionary expedition. »

Coinciding with the 150th anniversary of the Founding of the Salesian Congregation, this year's missionary expedition has a particular significance for us in this country. Two of these missionaries are being sent to a new mission territory – Great Britain. For many decades Salesian missionaries from the Salesian province in this country have been sent to other countries in Africa, India, South America and the Far East. Some died abroad, others have now returned, but others are still active in many countries - Hong Kong, South Africa, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Namibia, Tunisia and Brazil. Meanwhile the Church has flourished in these mission countries. There are now ten Salesian provinces in India, with well over two thousand Salesians. Two Indian Salesians are now missionaries in this country. Fr Cyril Edamana is now a member of our Battersea community in London and will be involved in pastoral work in the Sacred Heart Parish and the Salesian College. Brother Jayaraj has joined the community at Savio House to work in the youth retreat team, before continuing with his studies in preparation

for the priesthood. It is a source of great joy that the generosity of the traditional mission countries will help to bring new life to the provinces of Europe and our own in particular.

Fr Chávez recalled that the departing missionaries, religious and lay volunteers, were like the group of young men who on the 18th December 1859 decided to follow Don Bosco's dream. *To be a missionary is in fact a gift of the Spirit who ceaselessly calls all Christians to be disciples, witnesses and apostles of the Crucified and Risen Lord. They are called to go everywhere, even to the furthest ends of the earth, in order to proclaim the salvation which God has offered us in His Beloved Son. The challenge for them is to translate salvation into a commitment to make the life of everyone more human by giving one's own life in the fields of evangelisation, education, human development and social action.*

Fr Chávez recalled that Salesian missionaries, precisely because they are *signs and bearers of the love of God*, are called to make the presence of the Father visible by words and by witness. Fr Chávez mentioned several attitudes which missionaries are called to have today, since the way of being missionaries has totally changed. Inter-religious dialogue, ecumenism and inculturation create new conditions for proclaiming the Gospel.

Referring to the first reading of the Sunday Mass linked to the first part of the Sunday Gospel, Fr Chávez said:

This is a marvellous reply of Moses to the over-zealous request of the young Joshua: the **Spirit** should not be imprisoned. This implies a two-fold mistake, trying to exercise some sort of control over God, Who is the supremely **Free One**. The second mistake is trying to control our brothers and sisters, whose capacity to respond to God's plan we want to measure according to the standards we determine, almost as though we were the **lords** and not rather the **servants** of others. Jesus educated the apostles not to consider themselves **possessors** of the truth, but as **seekers** with everyone else. This is the way we become naturally **open** to all those who have something in common with us. Missionary activity therefore requires respect, dialogue, openness to others and a gentle approach. In conclusion the ninth successor of Don Bosco reminded the departing missionaries that **Christianity is not a label but a way of life!**

After the homily, the missionaries, each called by name with their destination mentioned, received the crucifix.

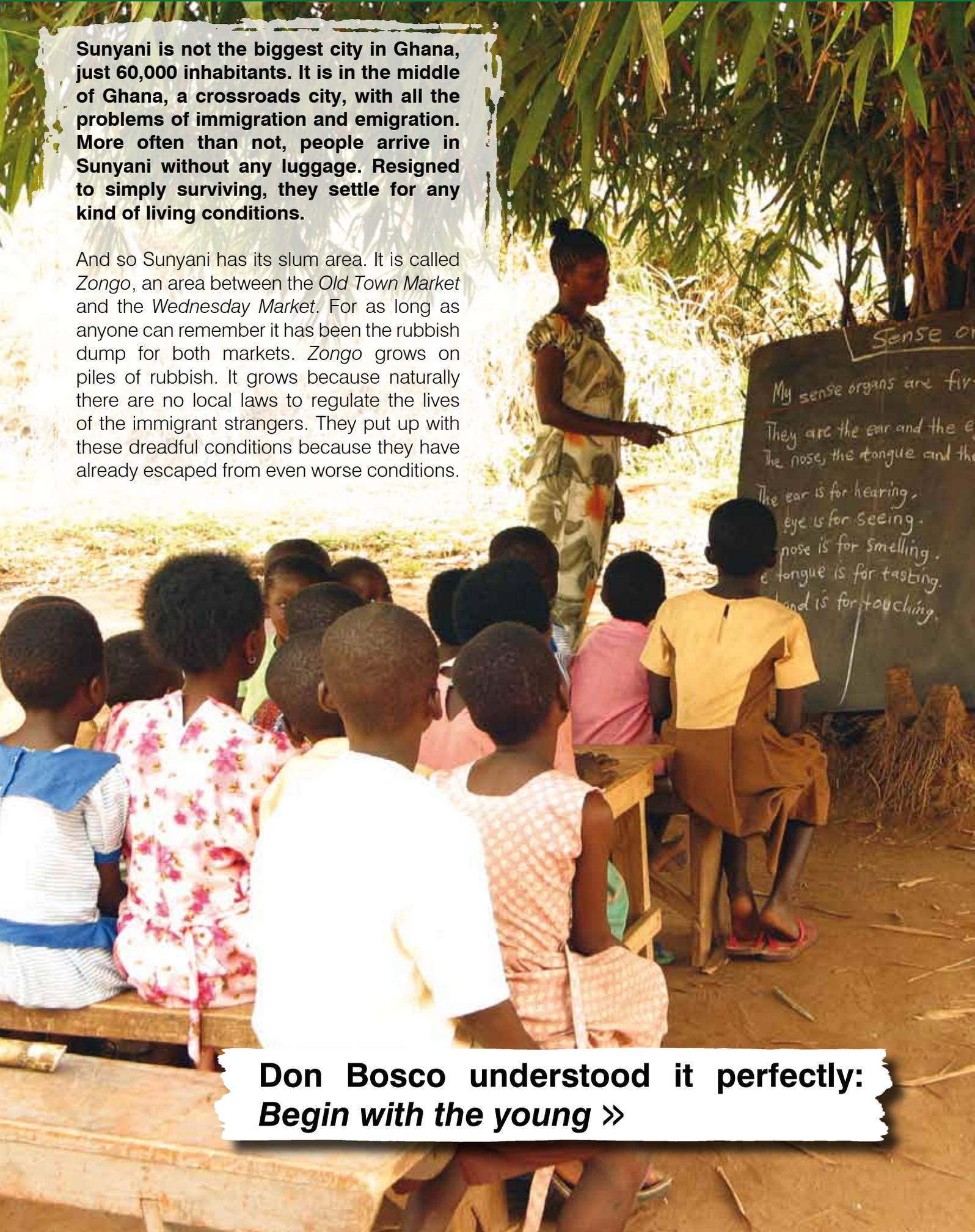


» **Christianity is not a label but a way of life**

Zongo Therapy

Sunyani is not the biggest city in Ghana, just 60,000 inhabitants. It is in the middle of Ghana, a crossroads city, with all the problems of immigration and emigration. More often than not, people arrive in Sunyani without any luggage. Resigned to simply surviving, they settle for any kind of living conditions.

And so Sunyani has its slum area. It is called *Zongo*, an area between the *Old Town Market* and the *Wednesday Market*. For as long as anyone can remember it has been the rubbish dump for both markets. *Zongo* grows on piles of rubbish. It grows because naturally there are no local laws to regulate the lives of the immigrant strangers. They put up with these dreadful conditions because they have already escaped from even worse conditions.



Sense of
My sense organs are five
They are the ear and the eye
The nose, the tongue and the hand
The ear is for hearing,
The eye is for seeing,
The nose is for smelling,
The tongue is for tasting,
The hand is for touching.

**Don Bosco understood it perfectly:
Begin with the young »**



The majority of the people are of Muslim origin; Islam is the style of social and religious school life in Zongo. A few kilometres away is *Don Bosco Home*. In Sunyani there aren't crowds of street children hounded by the police, but there are lots of youngsters left to their own devices who are orphans or from problem families. *Don Bosco Home* is their home, where about thirty of them, sometimes more sometimes less, live permanently. Many others come there with problems connected with school or health, or simply because they have a desperate need for someone to be their friend, to look after them.

It was these youngsters who, like a magnet, drew the Salesians to Sunyani. Two years ago, a young woman, a volunteer from Poland, who had been working for two years in *Don Bosco Home*, became aware that the poorest ones among her youngsters had began going to Zongo. She decided to set up a kind of temporary youth club there. She found a few square metres of space in the rubbish dump where the youngsters could meet, to play and spend time together.

Last summer a more courageous step was taken. The Imam and the other elders were contacted since they were the focal points of the communities of immigrants, who had come from various tribes, united in their common lack of income. The volunteer talked to them about the possibility of a *Summer Holiday Camp*. The reaction was not merely positive but enthusiastic. So instead of trying to welcome the youngsters from Zongo to *Don Bosco Home*, the holiday camps were set up where they were living. Local youngsters and the boys from *Don Bosco Home* enjoyed their summer activities together, involving more than 1,500 young people.

The tiny elementary school became more and more crowded every passing day since it was impossible to keep to *the fixed number* which the Imam and the Elders had stipulated. Two years previously, the volunteer had discovered, outside the school, a small open space. A few extra yards were added by covering the rubbish with sawdust which the saw-mills in the market *dumped* at Zongo. The programme was the same as for all summer camps here in Ghana: coming together as friends, with some time for games but also for lessons. especially in English and Maths and time for prayer.

The youngsters themselves took turns in leading the prayers which started at the beginning with the classic first *Sura* of the Koran, which opens every Muslim prayer,

followed by other verses which they had learned as children which they sing. When the youngsters learned that among them there was a tiny group of Christians, they all agreed to learn the *Our Father*. The *Koran* and the *Our Father* went hand in hand, at the beginning and end of every day.

During the formation time the leaders and the youngsters told the stories they had heard from the elders of the community. One of the most important days was that of the outing, with the truck from the woodwork shop, and all the pick-ups and minibuses available. The youngsters from *Don Bosco Home* and from the *Zongo Holiday Camp* were taken to the *Don Bosco Technical Institute* in Odumase. Here Moses and John Bosco, two Salesian novices from Nigeria, organised their own *Olympic Games*.

For the youngsters having at their disposal a whole sports field was like living a dream. The girls wearing their veils over their faces continued running up and down the hundred metres course dozens of times, even when the competition was over. At Zongo there are hardly ten metres where you can run freely, and, because of the rubbish, there are only small twisting paths to run along between broken glass and barbed wire.

The *Zongo Holiday Camp experience* has left an indelible mark on these children; they had discovered a new way to know each other. The variegated and marginalised Muslim community in Zongo met Christians to whom they could entrust their children, the most precious things they have, in an atmosphere of openness and trust without any of the useless baggage of extremism, fanaticism and intolerance.

For those who took part in running the *Zongo Holiday Camp* it was a great learning experience. It was a chance to see new faces, learn new names, listen to new life stories, meet people who appreciated them, overcoming the prejudices and barriers built and re-enforced by the different ethnic backgrounds.

The one thing that remains above all else is a new seed of hope in the heart of each one. They have discovered the remedy for any situation where there is conflict, isolation and distance between groups. A cure that starts with seeing the other person as a human being. Don Bosco understood it perfectly: *Begin with the young*. This is the characteristic feature of the Salesian missionary approach.

Bolton to Tanzania



» A lack of stress shone through

As the Community roasted a goat for our final meal in Africa, the Thornleigh Salesian College group met in the chapel of the Salesian retreat house in Nairobi. For ten students from Year 13 and three staff, this was an opportunity to reflect together on experiences and share some lasting impressions of Africa, during our simple evening prayer.

As we looked back over our time together, there was so much to talk about. The project had begun almost four weeks earlier. Flying via Qatar into Nairobi, we enjoyed the hospitality of the Salesian Community at Boys Town, before an eight-hour bus journey along dusty bumpy roads which took us to Moshi in Tanzania. There were three aspects to our trip. Firstly, it was an opportunity for the students to work in schools and experience the challenge of teaching having only finished A levels a few weeks earlier; secondly it was a chance to see something

of the country and more importantly the people of Tanzania; finally, living together in close proximity with just two toilets, two showers and a couple of cooking rings as the only facilities, it was to be an experience of community-sharing chores, supporting each other and reflecting on the journey we were travelling through.

Four of the students worked at Bendel Memorial School, a secondary boarding school primarily for boys. Another four were at Moshi Airport Primary school. Both of these schools are run by the Apostolic Community Life of Priests, founded by a Fr Bendel in the 1970s. The other two students went to the small secondary school run by the Salesians as a day school for students trying to catch up with education. At Bendel, on our first visit, the students sang the school song for us, singing *Education is the light of life*. In the primary school signs announced that excellence was tolerated – but they strove for perfection! Teaching was a new challenge for our students as they got to grips with text books and chalk. Playing football in



the shadow of Kilimanjaro, dissecting a cow's heart in a biology lesson, teaching the weather and time in the primary school and explaining the mathematical rules of circles were just some of the practical activities students recalled.

Classes were large, walls were undecorated and the day started early with the raising of flags and singing of anthems. Time for sport and recreation provided an opportunity to talk to the young people in the schools and many experiences were shared. However our memories focussed on the eagerness for education which was so apparent in all the schools. Students were eager to be in class, they took the opportunity of extra lessons and tutorials and they accepted the sometimes strict discipline that was evident. Yet, in so many ways, the impression was of children and young people being the same anywhere – the joy of playing sport, knowing what was going on in the English Premier League, keeping in contact via mobile phones, having ambitions for the future and wanting to spend time with friends. Thanks to the generosity of so many people back home were able to donate £5000 to the schools and saw the benefits of what the last group had left two years ago – some new play equipment in the primary and newly equipped science labs at Bendel; where the building work has not yet finished. Students in school remembered the names of that last group of Thornleigh visitors – a reminder of the impact we could have.

At the weekends, we had time to visit some of the country. We enjoyed a day climbing the first stage of Kilimanjaro - a ten mile round trip but one which afforded spectacular views of the Kibo summit and well worth the \$50 which non-citizens have to pay to spend a day on the mountain. ~On the second weekend we enjoyed a two-day safari to Lake Manyara and the Ngorongoro Crater. This really was a fantastic trip to what must clearly be described as one of the wonders of the natural world. Manyara has seen no rain now for three years and the lake is definitely shrinking but driving round its shores we experienced one of the most peaceful scenes any of us had ever seen. Half a dozen giraffes and zebras just grazed in the afternoon sun. The playful baboons, magnificent elephants and lounging hippos were all to be seen and hundreds of photos were taken. The Ngorongoro crater with its stunning approach, steep descent and vast interior would be amazing as an empty space but with its vast herds of wildebeest and zebra, it's warthogs, ostrich, bull elephants and prides of lions it reminded us

all of the splendour of nature and our need to protect the environment that provides home not only to these animals but also the Masai people around them. The beauty of nature was also seen on our final weekend as we travelled for six hours to the Indian Ocean. As guests of the Apostolic Life Community's hostel in Pangani, we enjoyed the beach, sea, wonderful food and fun of just being together in the sea and at table. Staring up at the numerous stars in the night or watching numerous crabs on the beach in the morning, we knew we were blessed to be there.

That was true of the whole trip despite the limited facilities in our house and the lack of variety in our menu – we dined on potato hash, tinned salmon pasta, meat stew or bean stew and frequently went shopping in the colourful market in town which tested our bartering skills. Once a week, we went out for dinner in Moshi; three courses with drinks for £5 – yet £5 was the equivalent of two and a half days wages for the local people. It was definitely food for thought! As we remembered the time spent together in the community and its surroundings, there were perhaps two things that stood out. Firstly, the tremendous welcome the local people gave us and the religious communities we came into contact with. The children loved playing, everyone greeted us and *wazungu* (white people) was a frequently heard sound accompanied with a wave. The other thing was the sense of happiness the people had. Despite the lack of so much that we take for granted, there was a smile and an ease, neighbourliness and an apparent lack of stress that shone through.

There were many individual memories and it was an important aspect of the trip that we kept diaries to record our experiences, to highlight what had challenged us and to record what we had learned. Much may emerge in time of how the trip shaped each individual but it was a blessed time in its sense of community, in its opportunity to serve and in the beauty of nature we were privileged to see and enjoy.



Andrew Waller SDB

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