

Don Bosco

TODAY

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125TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE CONSECRATION
OF THE SACRED HEART
CHURCH, BATTERSEA p36

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"When we are about to do something let us see, first of all, whether it is for the greater glory of God. Having made certain of that, go ahead, do not hesitate for your work will be successful."

Don Bosco

Welcome to our bumper edition of the spring Don Bosco Today.

As there has been so much happening these past few months, I decided to put it all in this edition. One of the reasons we are a little bit late with this edition!

As usual, many thanks for the affirmation we received for our last edition. It is always good to hear from our readers, especially to hear what you like and what you don't like. It certainly helps in our planning of future editions.

So, our Don Bosco Today is cram packed with material. I had the privilege of meeting up with the Rector Major in Panama at World Youth Day. A few days of vivid colour, youthful exuberance and deep spirituality and prayer; all who were with me agreed that our time in Panama was blessed. We have included a selection of photographs from Liam Parr, one of the official photographers of World Youth Day and a member of our Salesian network. On the back page are QR codes for more pictures and also videos.

Talking of celebrations, we also have an extended section on the 125th Anniversary of the Consecration of the Sacred Heart Church in Battersea, and we remember Fr Edward McKiernan SDB, the Salesian sent by Don Bosco himself to launch the mission in London.

We introduce to you one of the works of the Salesian Sisters in Great Britain: UR Space in Scotland, now in its sixth year of pastoral work with young people in Glasgow. At its very heart is a community of Sisters and young adults, living in the same house, working and praying together.

Many congratulations to the Province of Ireland as they celebrate 100 years of the Salesians in the Country.

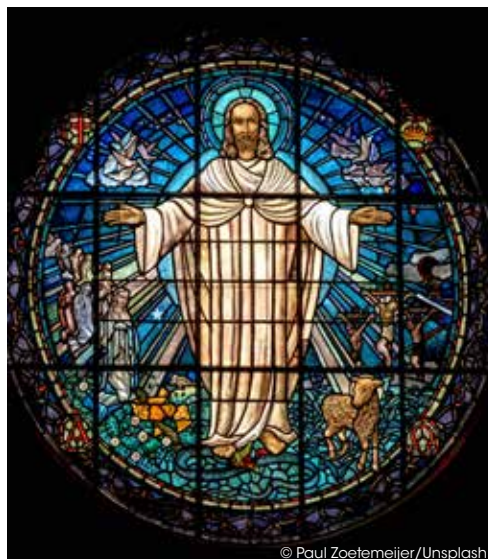
Wishing you all the blessings of the Risen Lord this Eastertime—may your family and friends be ever blessed.

To finish I share with you a prayer from Blessed Cardinal Newman.

Lord, help me to spread your fragrance everywhere I go.
Flood my soul with Your spirit and life.
Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly that all my life may only be a radiance of Yours.
Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel your presence in my soul.
Let them look up and see no longer me but only You, O Lord!
Stay with me, and then I shall begin to shine as you shine; so to shine as to be a light to others.
The light O Lord will be all from You; none of it will be mine;
It will be You, shining on others through me.

Fr Bob Gardner SDB

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The Salesians of Don Bosco came to Ireland, at the invitation of Dr Denis Hallinan, the Bishop of Limerick. On the Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception, 8th December 1919, four Salesians, led by Fr Aloysius Sutherland SDB, arrived in Copsewood House, Pallaskenry, Co. Limerick. They opened an Agricultural College, the first foundation of the Salesians in Ireland.

16 UR Space, Glasgow

The Salesian Sisters' Glasgow-based UR Space project has just begun its sixth year. Its mission is an unusual one, having at its heart a community of Sisters and young adults, living in the same house, sharing household tasks, working together, and praying together.

20 World Youth Day in Panama

A joint British and Austrian group attended the WYD activities in Panama. There were many highlights, including the Salesian Family Day in the Basilica of Don Bosco with the Rector Major and Mother Yvonne, tourist sites like the Panama Canal, Cultural events around the city, liturgical events and of course, the presence of Pope Francis. With young people from all over the world, but particularly from Central and South America, the city streets were awash with music and laughter.

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My teaching experience reminds me of Don Bosco as a young priest at the height of the Industrial Revolution, and how in the toughest of situations, he had to tackle the problems of poor young people. The young are always the most vulnerable and open to exploitation.

36 125th Anniversary of the Consecration of the Sacred Heart Church, Battersea: A Celebration

It is wonderful to have this opportunity to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the consecration of the Church of the Sacred Heart, together with the Battersea parish and Battersea Salesian communities. As well as being significant for the parish community, this is a deeply significant event in the establishing of the Salesian Province of St Thomas of Canterbury in Great Britain.

40 Obituary— Sr Kathleen Jones FMA

"For us she was the example of a true Salesian Sister, faithful to the teachings of Don Bosco and St Mary Mazzarello"





THE MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR DON ÁNGEL FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME

Let us learn to look “with the eyes of God”

I listened to the testimonies of dozens of young people during World Youth Day and the wonderful celebration of Don Bosco's feast day in Panama (with the most multitudinous procession that I've ever seen in my life). These young people recounted so many more stories from their lives of how they were looked upon with a “special” gaze—that of the Lord.

Dear Friends,

I met wonderful and marvellous young people at World Youth Day. During this time, Pope Francis spoke about Don Bosco and his ability to see with God's eyes. His words were broadcast via the Internet and sped around the world in a split second, where they will remain throughout time.

For me, the story of one young woman's life touched me deep in my heart. She was a young mum, who, due to a grave illness, imprisoned herself in her home for more than a year and a half. She didn't want to hear anything about anyone; she didn't want to visit anyone or receive visitors. As far as she was concerned, her life was over.

Those who loved her invited her to go to the Salesian house nearby. After much cajoling, she eventually went, and from that day forward until today, many years later, she has never left this Salesian presence. I met her there. I came to know her

there. I never could have imagined even for one minute how great a struggle and how many personal battles she had to face to survive. Her energy, her leadership, her ability to involve others and herself in things would have led me to think that hers was a life that was always growing and overflowing with good results and success. That wasn't the case until she was given that magnificent opportunity. With fear and trepidation, she had timidly approached and met people who “knew how to see with God's eyes” without asking for anything.

In the same way, I listened to the testimonies of dozens of young people during World Youth Day and the wonderful celebration of Don Bosco's feast day in Panama (with the most multitudinous procession that I've ever seen in my life). These young people recounted so many more stories from their lives of how they were looked upon with a “special” gaze—that of the Lord.

Embracing Life

Pope Francis put it beautifully during the vigil on Saturday when he stated that “embracing life is also seen in accepting things that aren’t perfect, pure or ‘distilled’, yet no less worthy of love.” This is what makes the difference in the way in which we treat each other as people.

We know, and many of us are convinced of this, certainly many of you dear friends, that “love heals.” Love is curative. Only the one who is loved can be saved. So, precisely because of this, the first step that we must undoubtedly take as educators and friends in our Salesian way, or simply as people of good will who live in this world, is “not to be afraid to welcome life as it comes ... to embrace life as it is” (Pope Francis at the vigil).

That young mother of whom I spoke at the beginning of this letter needed only to find a life-giving place to be, a place among people where with her hands, heart, mind and body she could feel she belonged and was “a part of something else,” of a much larger “community” that needed her, just as she was, with her life story. Finding such a place changed her life.

Pope Francis said much about Don Bosco during that vigil at World Youth Day. His words filled me with emotion while also being demanding because we couldn’t listen to them and remain indifferent. Commitment to Don Bosco today means making the same choices and the same decisions that he did and that he would make today.

The Gift of Roots

Pope Francis said, “Saint John Bosco didn’t go off to seek young people in far-off places (let’s see—those here who love Don Bosco, an applause!) ... Don Bosco didn’t go off to seek



young people in far-off or special places; *he simply learned how to see with God’s eyes* everything that was going on around him in his city. Thus, he was deeply affected by the hundreds of children and young people left to themselves, without education, without work and without the helping hand of a community. Many other people were living in the same city, and many criticised those young people, but they were unable to see them with God’s eyes. We need to see young people with God’s eyes. Don Bosco did, and he found the energy to take the first step: to embrace life as it presented itself. From there, he wasn’t afraid to take the second step: to create a community, a family, with them, where through work and study they could feel loved. *He gave them roots from which they could reach up to heaven*—so that they could be someone in society. To give them roots to hold onto and help them stand securely when the first stormy winds come their way. That is what Saint John Bosco did ...”

These things and much more from those days left their impression on me. They have filled my heart and my soul with many faces—just as the great bishop, Pedro Casaldàliga, said when he was drawing near death and imagined himself standing in God’s presence; when asked what he’d done in his life, he presented his hands empty, but his heart filled with names.

My friends, readers of the Don Bosco Today—this means of communication that was so beloved, appreciated and esteemed by its founder, Don Bosco: “The salvation God offers us is an invitation to be part of a love story interwoven with our personal stories. It’s alive and wants to be born in our midst so that we can bear fruit just as we are, wherever we are, and with everyone all around us” (Pope Francis).

**Affectionately,
Don Ángel**



SALESIAN SPIRITUAL COMPANIONSHIP WITH YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY

Inspired by The Praxis and Thought of
St John Bosco

A famous West End musical entitled 'The Sound of Music' recounts the inspiring story of a young girl named Maria searching to do God's Will in her life. Maria was studying to become a nun.

PASSION LED US HERE

Her superior advised this young girl to:

**Climb every mountain
Search high and low
Follow every byway
Every path you know ...
Follow every rainbow
'Till you find your dream.¹**

This famous song contains some noble advice. Our life is a fascinating adventure which offers contrasting moments of joy and difficulty. Attempting to *climb the mountain* can become tiring, especially if climbed alone. Having someone ready to offer companionship along the strenuous expedition towards the summit can indeed enrich the journey.

Perhaps one of the greatest risks in our lives is that we become so busy achieving our life dreams, so preoccupied with meeting our objectives and deadlines, that we have no time to notice what is truly happening in our lives. We get so immersed with the busyness of living that we fail to recognise the fuller meaning of life. On the other hand, when our human experience becomes more meaningful and profound it may achieve such vision, and literature and human sciences attest to this.

Our lives are full of moments when we have a choice between going deeper or moving to the next item, person or task. [We] pass by someone familiar and hear, "How are you?" [Do] we say "fine" and move on without missing a step [or] do we allow the question to linger within us for a few moments? When we eat a morsel of food, how much do we allow the taste and texture to wrap around our tongue before bringing in the next mouthful? In the times when we do go a little deeper, experience is not measured by quantity but is perceived as quality or intensity. Both experiences have value, but our lives are most significantly shaped by the intensities, the moments of greater depth.²

These moments make life worth living. The greatest contribution a spiritual companion can make to another person's life is to help one awaken to God's presence and to become more aware of God's mysterious ways.

Youth³ is perhaps one of the most challenging times in our life, particularly when it comes to grappling with the meaning of our human journey. It is a stage in our life when those all- important core questions about human existence crop up. Young people thirst for role models, significant adults who can accompany them, offering holistic formation within an environment wherein they feel welcomed, nurtured and loved.

¹ Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, 'Climb Ev'ry Mountain' in *The Sound of Music* (New York: Broadway, 1959).

² Tobin Hart, *From Information to Transformation* (New York NY: Peter Lang Pub., 2009), 1.

³ By using the term 'youth', reference is made to persons who are roughly 16 to 29 years old.





In my doctoral thesis on ‘Salesian Spiritual Companionship with Young People Today’, I chose to delve into the praxis of St John Bosco, a well-known educator of young people within the Catholic Church. This priest and educator of young people refused honours and titles during his lifetime, and today many refer to him simply as Don Bosco—the way he was addressed when he was alive. Don Bosco⁴ dedicated his life precisely to this mission of offering accompaniment particularly to young people and in turn creating a very unique praxis.

Understanding God’s Mysterious Ways

A glance at the early years of St John Bosco’s life bear witness to God’s mysterious ways. He was born on August 16, 1815, in a small rural hamlet called Becchi, some sixteen miles from Turin, Italy. The odds against John started from his infancy. Four years prior to John’s birth in 1811, his father Francesco⁵ was widowed and he was left with a three-year-old boy, Antonio. A year later, in 1812, Francesco remarried. From his second marriage to Margherita Occhiena⁶ two sons were born, Giuseppe in 1813 and John, two years later. Tragically, Francesco died of pneumonia when John was two years old. Francesco Bosco left the family in a precarious financial situation. Mamma Margherita was left a widow, with the duty of providing for three children, Antonio, Giuseppe and John. One observes that:

- 1) Notwithstanding the fact that John Bosco lost his father at the early age of two he still became renowned for his sense of spiritual fatherhood towards young people.
- 2) Although Don Bosco was born into a poor family, he is the founder of a financially ambitious project. His Salesian congregation today is spread all over the world with schools, oratories, children’s homes, hospitals and youth services online.
- 3) Even though Don Bosco was and died a diocesan priest, he founded one of the largest congregations in the Catholic Church.

John Bosco’s Personal Experience of Spiritual Accompaniment

John Bosco gradually achieved holiness through great personal effort and by abandoning himself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Divine Providence also sent him various spiritual guides. Before Don Bosco was able to win over young people’s hearts and transform their lives, his own heart had been won over by some caring and significant adults. Apart from the positive influence of his mother Margherita, John Bosco reaped the benefits of spiritual direction in two particularly crucial moments of his life with two people in particular. These two saintly spiritual directors were Fr Giovanni Calosso and (St) Joseph Cafasso.

The Unique Elements of Don Bosco's Method

During Don Bosco's time many young people had landed into the rapidly industrialising city of Turin,⁷ not only searching for a job, but also yearning for a caring relative or adult to latch on to. They were left to their own devices, faced with the struggle to survive and at risk of being exploited or of turning towards crime. Don Bosco was totally committed to being an educator, but also a father, a friend and a spiritual companion to these young people. He created an oratory in Turin where his young people could feel at ease and cared for. He "realized that, if his accompaniment of young people was to succeed, he had to convince them that they had found a 'friend,' someone they could trust and to whom they could open up their hearts."⁸ Don Bosco believed that the key to assuring a healthy future for society was to offer special care and accompaniment to youth, "the most precious and delicate portion of human society."⁹

Don Bosco, with his remarkable gifts as a spiritual companion, has left the Church and his Salesians a rich tradition in the realm of youth spiritual companionship. Don Bosco believed that it is not *doing something* for youth that counts but *being someone* to them. It is not *what we do* for them, but *who we are* to them. In such a natural way, Don Bosco enabled processes of spiritual growth and managed to be that *someone* who could offer direction to each youth. The unique features of Don Bosco's method can be summarised as follows:

- a) **Radicality**—Don Bosco's Spiritual Direction praxis stems from his radical commitment to youth spiritual accompaniment. Such a decision saw Don Bosco live a radical life in adhesion to the Gospel and in constant union with God. This in itself rendered Don Bosco a credible and trustworthy spiritual director.
- b) **Convergence of Styles**—Although Don Bosco did propose his own unique practice of Spiritual Direction, it appears that he did not really formulate an original form of spirituality. Don Bosco's genius consisted in adopting various spiritual elements from St Ignatius of Loyola, St Francis de Sales, St Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, St Vincent de Paul, St Philip Neri and St Joseph Cafasso and positively adapted them to his mission in youth accompaniment.



- c) **Totality**—Don Bosco was concerned about offering a holistic formation, comprising both the material and the spiritual welfare of each young person. The unique creation of a holistic Spiritual Direction praxis is also considered to be an original feature. Don Bosco gave the formative environment of the Oratory a fundamental role within the process of Spiritual Companionship of his boys. He wisely made use of various formal and informal techniques and facilitated spiritual growth on two levels: the group level and the individual level. Don Bosco's method of accompaniment was practically founded on three basic columns. The first column consisted in the *spiritual relationship* or *dialogue* established between the young person and the confessor/spiritual director. The second column was the *optimum environment* within which this relationship was built. The third column was the *active role* given to the young people themselves.

⁴ St John Bosco was a diocesan priest who lived from 1815–1888 in Turin and founded the Salesian congregation, approved by Pope Pius IX in 1873. Its mission is the evangelisation and holistic formation of young people. Cf. Francis Desramaut, 'Jean Bosco (Saint), Fondateur des Salésiens, des Filles de Marie-Auxiliatrice et des Coopérateurs Salésiens, 1815–1888', in Dict. Sp. VIII (1974), 291.

⁵ Francesco Luigi Bosco was born on January 20, 1784 in Castelnuovo. Desramaut, 'Jean Bosco (Saint)', 292.

⁶ Margherita Occhiena was born on April 1, 1788 at Capriglio, Asti. Cf. Joseph Aubry, *Mamma Margherita* (Leumann: LDC, 1994).

⁷ The full effects of the Industrial Revolution (initiated in Britain) hit Italy during the 1800s. Cf. Thomas Southcliff Ashton, *The Industrial Revolution 1760–1830* (London: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁸ Luciano Pazzaglia, 'Don Bosco's Option for Youth', in P. Egan and M. Midali, *Don Bosco's Place in History* (Roma: LAS, 1993) 273.

⁹ Giovanni B. Lemoyne, *The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco, II* (New Rochelle: Salesiana, 1966) 35.

- d) **Happiness**—The most deeply-rooted aspiration in the human heart is the quest of happiness. This pursuit of happiness manifests itself through a profound sense of joy which characterises Don Bosco's Spiritual Direction praxis. Don Bosco believed that it was easy to become holy, and he considered joy as a sure sign of a life of grace. Don Bosco's spirituality of joy and optimism and his attractive path to holiness was a breath of fresh air during his time.
- e) **Creativity**—Another important aspect is Don Bosco's creativity and ability to render spiritual concepts appealing to young people. Don Bosco's writings reveal a lot about his formal and informal Spiritual Direction. His formal approach with various young people through personal dialogue and Confession is recorded in the various hagiographical writings on Savio, Magone and Besucco.¹⁰ These biographies, which in themselves were informal methods of accompaniment, offered inspiration to the other young people still on the journey of spiritual growth. Within Don Bosco's formative environment, these pocket edition writings were in themselves informal tools used to reinforce the formal Spiritual Direction practices offered at the Oratory.
- f) **Astuteness**—Don Bosco was a believer in prevention. The word *prevenire* implies offering accompaniment so as to clear the path from the various obstacles to growth. Don Bosco's preventive method was built on religion, reason and loving kindness, and he believed that accompaniment should start as early as possible.
- g) **Perfection**—Don Bosco adopted St Francis de Sales' belief that holiness is for all. He brought this vision one step further and incorporated adolescents and young people within this universal call to holiness. Don Bosco strived to enable young people to reach their full potential and, if possible, holiness. Don Bosco played an influential part in the Church's understanding of child holiness. Towards the end of the 1900s, the Church witnessed the opening of many causes of canonisation of young children and adolescents. St Dominic Savio and Blessed Laura Vicuña were among the first fruits of this change in mentality.
- h) **Simplicity**—Another aspect is Don Bosco's ability to move away from stage-based Spiritual Direction models and recognise high spiritual states in adolescents and young people. His conviction in youth holiness was combined with his ability to recognise signs of high spiritual states regardless of age. While classical Spiritual Direction models speak of stages in spiritual development, Don Bosco's writings seem to emphasise more the possibility of high spiritual states (rather than spiritual stages) in young people.

Young People Today

Today, some two hundred years on from Don Bosco's birth, the situation of young people in Europe has changed, but the opportunities and challenges for those offering youth accompaniment remain. The contemporary world is marked by a culture dominated by technology, based on 'science' and the boundless possibilities it promises. Alas, in this culture "sadness and loneliness appear to be on the rise, not least among young people."¹¹

Young people today have grown up in a culture dominated by the current technologies of virtual communication. Online communication provides possible access to a range of exciting opportunities. Having left behind the era of the chisel and stone, of ink and paper, young people are expressing themselves with new languages, fresh methods and innovative forms of education. Within this virtual reality, young people have become actors and scriptwriters within their own space, with their language and their contents.¹² They discover and reinvent themselves and demand the right to navigate and to dialogue in cyberspace. In the process, young people risk "bringing those far away much closer, while at the same time making those near [to them]



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¹⁰ Cf. Aldo Giraudo, 'Introduction' to *Vite di Giovanni Bosco* (Rome: LAS, 2012), 4.

¹¹ Cf. Synod of Bishops, *Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment, Preparatory Document for Synod 2018* (January 2017) http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20170113_documento-preparatorio-xv_en.html [Accessed November 17, 2017].

¹² Cf. Siân Lincoln, *Youth Culture and Private Space* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 106.

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more distant.”¹³ This form of communication renders young people in particular vulnerable to risks which undoubtedly hinder their quest for meaning. Pornography, gambling, cyberbullying, hidden dangers in chatrooms and ideological manipulation are among the threats young people face today. Educators and youth workers today urgently need to be attentive to these obstacles to growth.

Another challenge facing those offering youth accompaniment is an apparent struggle and resistance in young people to making definitive life choices.¹⁴

The life prospects of a young person in today’s world are far from certain. Only a decade ago, almost all young people knew by the end of adolescence where they would live, what their occupation would be, and whom they were going to marry. Today, most young people have no answers to these questions well into adulthood.¹⁵

This state of affairs is largely due to a technocratic society which is going through a rapid process of transformation. The sheer pace of this development creates a situation of fluidity and uncertainty. Our Western culture is controlled by a frantic

search for short-term profits and this is the basis of what Pope Francis refers to as the ‘throw-away’¹⁶ culture. It is a mentality which excludes millions of people, including many young people, and leads to the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources and environmental degradation, threatening the future of upcoming generations. Within this environment, the notion of freedom is understood as the possibility of having access to ever-new opportunities. Young people often shy away from embarking on a personal journey of life, if it means surrendering the possibility of different future paths: “Today I choose this, tomorrow we’ll see.”¹⁷

Multiculturalism is another social aspect which poses its challenges in youth accompaniment. Many European societies are increasingly multicultural and multireligious. While our societies are fast becoming “creative breeding grounds for people of all kinds of backgrounds” the “exclusion of certain social groups of young people”¹⁸ is a sad reality. The Eurobarometer report for 2016 highlights the fact that immigrant groups are constantly faced with the challenge of social integration.¹⁹ The situation can lead to uncertainty and the temptation of relativism. In my view, it is a moral duty

¹³ Shane Hipps, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture*, (New York: Zondervan, 2005) 105.

¹⁴ Cf. Manuela Du Bois-Reymond, ‘I Don’t Want to Commit Myself Yet: Young People Life Concepts’, in *Journal of Youth Studies*, I edited by A. Furlong (Oxford: OUP, 2012), 63–79.

¹⁵ William Damon, *The Path to Purpose* (New York NY: First Free Press, 2009) 1.

¹⁶ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si, On Care for our Common Home*, Encyclical Letter (Roma: LEV, 2015), 22.

¹⁷ Synod of Bishops, *Young People, Preparatory Document for Synod 2018* (January 2017).

¹⁸ EU, *Urban Youth and Europe Day* (Brussels: 2011) 19.

¹⁹ EU, *Youth in Europe Special Eurobarometer of the European Parliament* (Brussels, EPRS, May 2016).



of all educators to engage in fruitful dialogue and mutual enrichment and facilitate a much-needed sense of belonging in a diverse society.

Notwithstanding all these fluctuating social dynamics, the great Timothy Radcliffe offers a fascinating assessment of young people in Europe. He believes that young Europeans, in this period of secularism, are searching. When they feel a bit lost, they explore where they are in terms of their faith journey. He affirms their need to be able to ask questions, even risky questions, when they find themselves in a safe context. Radcliffe claims that although Europe is secularised:

There is still a deep hunger for God. People do not only look to Christianity alone but to all religions. The young especially are interested in spirituality rather than doctrine. They are interested in God more than the Church. They are greatly preoccupied by death.²⁰

The Church and society cannot interest and influence young people without understanding their pain. In my view, as adults we have to avoid the “grumpy grownups”²¹ syndrome which perceives young people to be living in a different world, full of disrespect and antisocial behaviour. It takes credible efforts to engage with young people, and in my view, Don Bosco has left us with a model of youth accompaniment which remains relevant in today’s context.

Salesian Spiritual Companionship Today

In order to continue this mission of spiritual accompaniment and youth holiness after his death, Don Bosco purposely set up the Salesian religious community. In Don Bosco’s vision, the Salesian community was to be fervently present to the young, offering a plurality of proposals which presented spiritual life in an attractive manner. What follows are proposed requirements for a more efficacious Salesian Spiritual Companionship:

- 1) **To provide early solid grounds and role models**—The young need mature adult companions and not grownups who behave like self-centred adolescents. Young people need to perceive the strength and desire to look forward, to dream and project, embodied in those who have walked the walk before them. Perhaps this is why young people often feel frustrated or broken when they do not meet such companions. Young people yearn for role models of adulthood and parenthood. According to St John Paul II, one of the greatest tragedies of our world is that there are many orphan children, and even worse, these children are the “orphans of living parents.”²²

Young people are turned off by irrational rigour or severity. Neither do they like the chaos of a freedom that is full of hesitations. Their need to hold on to a significant adult does not stem simply from a quest for safety. Theirs is something more solid: the acknowledgement that people are closely connected to their roots and will fulfil themselves only, and insofar, as they remain true to them, without losing their own originality. Young people have a longing for solid ground, and if they do not find it in their parents or in their teachers, they will seek it in their friends; if they have no friends, they will look for it in an ideology or they will take refuge in false and alienating comforts, but they will never stop looking for solid points of reference.

Salesians today should indeed be adult companions offering solid ground to young people by challenging and inviting them to embark on a process of spiritual growth. Due to the fact that spirituality is an innate human quality which risks being disabled due to trends of our Western multicultural and secularised contemporary society, such an invitation needs to be made as early as possible. Just like in Don Bosco’s time, young people today need to be provided with and provoked by real role models who have reached the goal of holiness.

²⁰ Timothy Radcliffe, *The Contribution of Christianity to the Future of Europe*, (May 2, 2013) <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=11878>. [Accessed March 31, 2014].

²¹ Maggie Baxter, *Different World: How Young People can Work Together* (London: Lemos and Crane, 2006) 6.

²² John Paul II, *Letter to Families* (February 2, 1994) http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii LET_02021994_families.html [Accessed November 21, 2016].

- 2) **To create a meaningful family environment**—An integral part of the Salesian Spiritual Companionship process is the provision of an adequate formative and family environment. The Oratorian community environment should indeed be the Salesians' unique response to a void which has been created due to an individualistic mentality which dominates our secular Western contemporary culture. Never has there been more need for the various Salesian schools, parishes and oratories around the world to be communities which facilitate in young people processes of human and spiritual development.
- 3) **To foster a vocational culture**—Salesian accompaniment constantly works at fostering a vocational culture and creating an environment which offers the young person a place to sow, develop and bring to maturity important life choices. Pascual Chavez Villanueva²³ encourages all those offering spiritual accompaniment to help every young person to “discover, take up and responsibly follow his or her vocation.”²⁴ Furthermore he asserts that:
- the first condition following Don Bosco's example consists in creating an environment which experiences and passes on a true ‘culture of vocation,’ that is, a way of conceiving and of tackling life as a freely received gift; a gift to be shared in the service of the fullness of life for everyone, overcoming an individualistic, consumeristic, relativist mentality and a culture of self- fulfilment.²⁵
- 4) **To maintain a harmonious balance**—Don Bosco's spiritual direction method is a journey occurring simultaneously within the context of a group and on an individual level. This praxis is unique in the sense that spiritual direction is not merely limited to the periodical one-to-one meeting between the spiritual director and the individual seeking guidance. Don Bosco managed to maintain a balance between the spiritual growth processes occurring on a group level and on an individual level. He made use of various methods which could be categorised as formal and informal. This distinction deserves clarification.
- The *formal* approach tends to be regular and is based on agreement. In this approach consent is given to be guided and it gradually develops over time.
 - *Informal* accompaniment tends to be based on the opportunity to seek or offer advice, for example, in the playground. Such accompaniment is irregular and may involve a variety of mentors.
- 5) **To exercise practical and spiritual wisdom**—Developments in psychology are of great importance and can offer great insight to the Salesian Spiritual Companion. Psychology offers useful tools in understanding various patterns and stages in faith development. While acknowledging Don Bosco's ability in recognising high spiritual states in young people, the Salesian Spiritual Companion should be open to such signs while paying attention to developmental theories that could facilitate a greater understanding of God's presence and will.
- 6) **To prioritise self-care and supervision**—The Salesian Spiritual Companion should be a person who is also going through a process of personal growth. Finding time to pray, to reflect and to allow oneself to be guided and transformed is an essential part of offering a true and authentic spiritual accompaniment. Finding moments of silence and solitude render the guidance offered more meaningful. Romano Guardini offers a fascinating reflection on the value of silence. He asserts that:
- By banishing silence, our society also exiled the meaningful word. A silence that is not a rejection of the language, but rather a reappraisal of the word. Those who love silence also love the essential word. Those who do not know long and luminous silence will never be able to enlighten with the word. Only men and women who have meaningful silence have meaningful words. A silence, which is a secret place, a safe harbour to restore a deranged, worn and non-essential language.²⁶
- Without a doubt Salesian Spiritual Companionship has become ever more challenging today and requires an ability to live these moments of silence and with great humility confront those areas of personal growth which need to be looked into.

²³ Fr Pascual Chavez Villanueva was the 9th successor of Don Bosco (2002–2014).

²⁴ Chavez Villanueva, “Come and See” The Need for Vocation Ministry, in ACG 409, (Roma: 2011), 30.

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Romano Guardini, *Linguaggio, Poesia, Interpretazione* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2000), 15–16. “La nostra società al confinare il silenzio, ha esiliato anche la parola significativa. Un silenzio che non è rifiuto del linguaggio, ma rivalorizzazione della parola. Chi ama il silenzio ama anche la parola essenziale. Chi non conosce lunghi silenzi luminosi non riuscirà mai ad illuminare con la sua parola. Hanno parole significative solo gli uomini e le donne che vivono un silenzio significativo. Un silenzio che è luogo segreto, orto sicuro in cui restaurare il linguaggio sgangherato, logoro, non essenziale.” (AT).



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Conclusion

All adults, particularly those involved with youth and education, have an obligation to offer solid ground to the younger generation. Offering accompaniment to young people in their quest for holistic growth is not just about passing on knowledge in a classroom. It importantly implies “being a role model.” In other words, transmitting through example values which promote mutual respect, love, justice, equality, tolerance and human dignity. In my view, the future of our society relies heavily on our example and abilities. For this is the challenge: as mature, authentic adults we need to engage with the younger generation, to offer them meaningful opportunities for holistic growth and maturity.

As Salesians committed to the mission of youth accompaniment, finding time to reflect on Don Bosco is pivotal. Offering spiritual accompaniment to others necessitates a process of personal growth. Finding time to pray and to allow oneself to be guided is an essential part of offering authentic spiritual guidance. The enhancement of our

response to the need for youth accompaniment is very much in tune with the concerns raised by Pope Francis:

We cannot speak of the future without reflecting on ... the responsibility we have for our young; more than a responsibility, the right word would be debt, yes, the debt we owe them. To speak of a year's end is to feel the need to reflect on how concerned we are about the place of young people in our society.²⁷

Salesian spiritual accompaniment is indeed a great gift to the Church and to young people today. In my view, within the context of our contemporary Western culture, Don Bosco's style and praxis of accompaniment could never be more relevant. In a nutshell, Salesian Spiritual Companionship is strikingly inspiring for its being charismatic, meaningful and of service.

Louis Grech SDB

²⁷ Pope Francis, *First Vespers on the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God and Te Deum in Thanksgiving for the Past Year* (December 31, 2016) http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2016/documents/papa-francesco_20161231_te-deum.html [Accessed January 14, 2017]. ne, 2006) 6.

A Prayer for 100 YEARS

Loving Father, whether we look back in gratitude for how you have walked by our side, or forward into how you will lead and comfort us, we know we are your beloved children.

We thank you for Don Bosco, an educator filled with a Spirit of fire and gentleness who continues to inspire us with confidence in ourselves

and in our ability to act justly, to love tenderly and walk respectfully on the earth.

As we celebrate the promise of the Salesian story, may we live in communion with all our sisters and brothers together with Don Bosco and with Mary, the Mother of his dream.

We pray in the name of Jesus who shows us the way.

Amen

100 YEARS of Salesians in Ireland 1919-2019

The Salesians came to Ireland in 1919, at the invitation of Dr Denis Hallinan, the Bishop of Limerick.

On the Feast day of the Immaculate Conception, 8th December 1919, four Salesians, led by Fr Aloysius Sutherland SDB, arrived in Copsewood House, Pallaskenry, Co.Limerick. They opened an Agricultural College, the first foundation of the Salesians in Ireland.

The Salesians of the GBR Province send our heartfelt greetings to our Irish brothers and wish them every blessing for the next 100 years.

The pictures reflect the Rector Majors visit to Ireland to celebrate their centenary.

**SALESIANS
IRELAND**



1919-2019
CENTENARY



pictures, logo and design © SDB Media/Ireland

Celebrate the past, CREATE THE FUTURE!



UR Space Glasgow

Salesian Sisters (FMA) – UR Space Vision

“As Salesian Sisters in the UK our aim is to form one community of Sisters and young adult volunteers, seeking a shared experience of Christian community in mission at the service of the local church for the faith formation of young people. At the heart of this community’s mission is the on-going formation of the volunteers for peer ministry.

We carry out this mission by offering retreats, prayer experiences, and opportunities for service that can help young people integrate their home, school and parish life.



The Salesian Sisters' Glasgow-based UR Space project has just begun its sixth year. Its mission is an unusual one, having at its heart a community of Sisters and young adults, living in the same house, sharing household tasks, working together, and praying together.

I recently spent some time with UR Space, to find out how this innovative concept came about, how it works, and what it offers to the volunteers and the young people they work with. Staying with the UR Space community in Newlands, Glasgow showed me a glimpse of community life, and I spent a day seeing the team in action at a retreat day for S2 students (age 12-14) from John Paul Academy, held at Carfin Grotto.

When changing circumstances led to the closure of Brettagh Holt, their youth retreat centre near Kendal, the Sisters wanted to find a way of continuing the ministry to the young they had offered for over forty years and developing it to suit the needs of the 21st century. Brettagh's Time Out project had brought young people away from their usual environments to the Lakeland countryside for retreats and workshops; taking a fresh and bold approach, it was decided to create a peer ministry outreach project from an urban base. With an existing presence in Easterhouse, it made sense to envision a project based in Glasgow.

The resulting UR Space project is deeply concerned with the formation of young people, and this operates at two levels. The team offers retreats to schools and parishes in and around Glasgow, working with children and young people of primary and secondary school age. The experience of being immersed in an FMA community, living and working alongside Salesian Sisters who are also experienced animators, provides continuous development



and formation for the young adult volunteers who join the community each year.

Once the idea for the new project had taken shape, and a suitable community house had been found the first community moved in, in August 2013: Sr Connie Cameron FMA as Animator, with Sr Esther Murphy MFA and Sr Bernadette Cassidy MFA, along with the first volunteers: Becky from St John Bosco Arts College Liverpool, and Sarah, from VIDES Germany.

The current UR Space community is at present Sr Bernadette Cassidy MFA, Sr Elizabeth Purcell FMA and Sr Gill McCambridge MFA, Edward Abela from Malta and Veronika Pavlovova from Slovakia.

UR Space currently works with around 20 Secondary Schools and a growing number of primary schools. In the Secondary Schools, the work is usually with a year group at a time, so every class of around 35 – 40 students will have a one-day UR Space retreat. In the Primary Schools, retreats are often around the time of the children's sacraments, at about age seven for Reconciliation, eight for First Communion, and ten or eleven for Confirmation.

Retreats are tailored to the needs of each school and year group. Sr Bernie told me that the team will usually spend a day and a half to two days planning and preparing resources for each retreat, "Because we've got 200 children across all the year groups, the preparation takes a lot of time," she said. "In planning each retreat and the resources we'll use, we work together as a team, meeting whatever the school has asked for, and sharing ideas. It's all gradual steps, from adapting work we've done before to writing something totally new".

Activities for retreats are varied, to make them both meaningful and great fun, and they include art, music,



© SalesianLink/LEWIS

drama and games as well as discussions, prayer and reflection. The UR Space volunteers are inspiring role models to the students as they are able to experience the faith and justice motivations of other young people not much older than themselves.

All applicants to UR Space are invited to visit for a look-see at life in the community. Sr Bernie told me “It’s important that they spend a few days getting a feel for the life, so that they really know what’s involved and can see this isn’t just a youth work job.”

When I visited in the spring, the team had two volunteers, Niamh and Ana. Niamh is from Stornoway in the Western Isles, and she applied to be a volunteer after her mother saw UR Space on Twitter and told her it sounded just what she was looking for. There are no Salesians in Niamh’s part of the world, so she had not encountered their unique approach to young people. Ana, from Madrid, joined the project later in the year. At home in Spain, Ana knew the Salesians well, and she had already been actively engaged in their work.

I asked Niamh, who will study performing arts after UR Space, what skills she thinks the experience has given her. “I think I’m more confident as ‘me’: onstage you’re somebody else. I’ve skilled up in communication, meeting so many people and learning how to communicate in the right way for each group.

The experience you get is phenomenal. I don’t think you could get it anywhere else. I’ve done so many different things I never thought I could do.

Niamh – UR Space volunteer
2017-18

“I’m young, and I have a lot in common with the young people we work with, but it’s really interesting listening to the differences in their experience of life. I was someone from an island, and in their lives, they face completely different challenges from me. I’m getting to know people in different situations and seeing how they cope with them.”

For Niamh, one of the highlights of her year at UR Space was the team’s visit to Make Some Noise in 2017, the Salesian Youth Gather held at Bolton. This was her first glimpse of Salesian youth ministry at a national level, and she found it “amazing”. After eight months in the project, she says “I love the Salesian way - it feels like everyone should be doing things this way all the time. The whole project is to make young people’s lives better, making them aware people *really are* there for them”

Special occasions such as the visit of the FMA Superior General, Mother Yvonne Reungoat, brought the volunteers into contact with the Salesian Family on a larger scale than their regular experience at UR Space, and seeing the love

and affection the Sisters have for each other made a strong impression on the volunteers, which they spoke about a great deal.

For Sr Bernie, witnessing this positive impact is important for the sisters too, “Our volunteers are continually amazing. Their reactions to Mother Yvonne’s visit and Sr Gill’s profession made me stop taking my Salesian life for granted. And last week, when they visited Cowley and saw the way our elderly

sisters are still in love with the life, they commented on how it radiates through their faces, and on the way they all love each other. Meeting with the elderly sisters is an experience of life, and these young people showed such interest and care for them.”

I asked Niamh what she would say to people considering a gap year with UR Space:

“The experience you get is phenomenal, and I don’t think you could get it anywhere else. I’ve done so many different things I never thought I could do. “You could never get the fulfilment and the joy of Salesian life without living in a community, Niamh said. “Working 9-to-5 with people, you have just one level of what they are like, but living





with each other, you see them on every level. You can work around problems as you know each other so well.”

“You need to work so hard to get the best out of it – it is hard work – but it’s most fulfilling when you do your best. You need the goal of what **YOU** want to achieve from the experience, and you need to be realistic.”

Sr Elizabeth said, “The skills and opportunities for personal growth that the volunteers gain are relevant and transferable, no matter what they might like to do in the future. It’s also an opportunity to get to know yourself in an environment where people are supportive and caring – a step into independence, living away from home, but with the support of our community behind you.”

“The community plan for the year is done together, and everything is evaluated each midterm,” said Sr Bernie. “The volunteers know the orientation and they are involved in all aspects of the life of the community – prayer life, cooking, cleaning - they share all of it with us. The work we do is demanding, so we set time aside to take trips away, and just enjoy the beautiful country we live in, have fun and enjoy each other’s company. The volunteers are also encouraged to keep up with their own interests and make new friends.

“The community is what the people who come want to make of it. As Sisters and Volunteers, we’re all in it together; – we help each other adapt and thrive – it’s formation for all of us” she added.

“Our mission is to support the young,” said Sr Elizabeth, “and our project benefits young people in the schools and parishes we work with, but URSpace is also about being of benefit to our volunteers. The saying is you don’t teach the Salesian spirit, you catch it. The volunteers are amazing in how they pick up things - they pick it up pure.”

As an outreach project in an urban context, URSpace is well placed to identify and respond to the changing needs of young people.

The project continues to develop and evolve: in September 2018, the community welcomed its first male volunteer and on occasion, senior students from schools the project has worked with, have joined the team in delivering retreats. This enhances the URSpace aim of peer ministry and giving young people valuable experience during their school careers.

Clare Lewis

all photos © SalesianLink/LEWIS

Want to be a UR Space Volunteer?

Applications for 2019-20 are open now!

- **Aged 18-35?**
(open to both men and women)
- **Keen to work with young people?**
- **Want to develop youth work skills?**
- **Want to live in a Salesian community with other young people?**
- **Passionate about the value of young people?**
- **Keen to help form others in faith?**
- **Want to develop in your own faith journey?**

Get in touch with UR Space:
urspace2013@gmail.com

The programme runs from August to June each year.

Volunteers receive accommodation and meals and an allowance.

There are no costs other than your travel from home to the project and back.

WORLD YOUTH DAY PANAMA 2019

A joint British and Austrian group attended the WYD activities in Panama. There were many highlights, as you can see from the photographs - they included the Salesian Family Day in the Basilica of Don Bosco with the Rector Major and Mother Yvonne, tourist sites like the Panama Canal, Cultural events around the city, liturgical events and of course, the presence of Pope Francis.

With young people from all over the world, but particularly from Central and South America, the city streets were awash with music, laughter and the sheer exuberance of youth.

Roll on the next WYD - in Portugal!!

All photos © Liam Parr





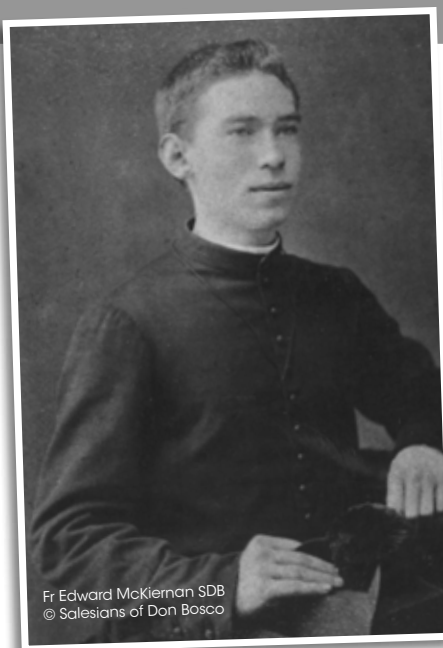






Remembering Salesian Pioneers

‘The grain falls into the ground for the growing period. There is no better foundation stone than the stone which is the tomb of a priest and religious.’ The life and ministry of Fr Edward Patrick McKiernan SDB: Laying the foundations of future developments for the Salesians of Don Bosco in the UK.¹



Fr Edward McKiernan SDB
© Salesians of Don Bosco

We meet here to remember Fr Edward Patrick McKiernan SDB, the first Irishman to become a Salesian of Don Bosco, who was chosen by St John Bosco to lead the pioneer group of Salesian missionaries to London in 1887; the first Rector of the first Salesian House in Great Britain; the first

Salesian Parish Priest of Battersea and the first Salesian to die in the Province and to be buried.

Today also has a special resonance as we remember Fr McKiernan. Today, October 13, is the feast day of St Edward the Confessor, who died in 1066 and whose tomb and shrine lie only a few miles from here in Westminster Abbey. It is Fr McKiernan's patronal feast day, Edward being his baptismal name. On October 13, 1884, Don Bosco appointed Fr McKiernan to the responsibility of Prefect General or Bursar of the Oratory at Valdocco, which had been home to Don Bosco and 'his boys' since 1846 and is to this day the Motherhouse of the Salesians of Don Bosco. Today is also the 130th anniversary of the last time that Fr McKiernan was able to celebrate Mass. He celebrated his final Mass in the corrugated iron church in Trott Street, Battersea, that served as the parish church until it gave way to the present parish church of The Sacred Heart of Jesus. From this day until his death a few weeks later on December 30, 1888, Fr McKiernan became too weak to celebrate Mass again.

We remember these facts as we gather today to bless the new headstone on his grave, and in remembering, we give thanks for his life and for his ministry as a Salesian priest.

When we remember, our memory makes the past present to us once again. Our remembering is not a nostalgic

looking backwards. The memory of all that we have received since those initial days of our Province history, coming as it does from the goodness and the love of God, enables us to look forward to the future with confidence and hope.

Fr McKiernan is certainly far from being a distant memory. By reading about him in the literature of the time—articles, memoir and letters, he becomes a tangible presence and a voice that speaks to us. In the Salesian Bulletin for March 1889 there is an article that puts Fr McKiernan's life and death into the historical context of his times.² It is a contemporary account of his life and death and of his mission as a Salesian. It was originally written in Italian, but we can rediscover it today thanks to the kindness of one of my Salesian confrères who has translated it for us into English. It begins:

The Salesians in England: A sorrowful start to their apostolate—Father MacKiernan [*sic*].

On December 30, 1888 in the little Salesian House in Battersea, London, Fr Edward Patrick MacKiernan died.

Whoever knew this young priest could not but love him, and a great deal, such were the beautiful gifts that shone out in him. His open, patient and affectionate heart had led him to do good to everyone and especially to the boys. There are thousands in Italy who knew him and who now mourn his loss and hold his memory dear.

He was born in Scrabby, a small village in County Cavan in Ireland on November 10, 1860. He entered the Oratory of Saint Francis of Sales in Turin on June 4, 1876, drawn there by the reputation of Don Bosco,³ to whom he became so attached that he decided to become a Salesian. He completed his studies successfully, and on March 29, 1884, he was ordained priest. On October 13 of the same year Don Bosco made him Prefect General of the Oratory. For several years he had already been Vice Prefect. Although still so young, he was extremely capable of managing with a firm hand and intelligent foresight a house with over 1,000 residents. But on November 14, 1887,

¹ Talk given by Fr Kieran Anderson SDB at the Service of Remembrance which followed the blessing of the renovated headstone on the grave of Fr McKiernan SDB at St Mary Magdalen Parish, Mortlake, London on Saturday, 13 October 2018.

² *Bollettino Salesiano* (Anno X111 N.3) Marzo 1889, 38–40, translated by Fr Bernard Grogan SDB.

³ John Melchior Bosco (1815–1888), ordained priest in 1841 in Turin, Italy and established the Salesians. He was canonised on April 1, 1934.

as the first house in England was about to be opened, Fr MacKiernan left for London with some confrères to take the position of Rector of the Church of the Sacred Heart in Battersea. He found it very painful to leave the Oratory and especially Don Bosco, whom he loved so much and whom he would never see again on this earth. Having arrived at his destination he showed himself untiring in his work for the eternal salvation of his poor Irish compatriots who were living in large numbers in that district.

But his apostolate was very short. He had a delicate constitution, and for a number of years he had had a weak chest, indigestion and not infrequently suffered fevers. Nevertheless, he felt strong and courageous enough to undertake the mission. But after one occasion, having rushed to visit a dying man and having spent long hours in cold and damp places while perspiring, he caught a severe cold which was the start of the illness that slowly led him to the grave.

The long and fruitful hours, especially on Saturday evenings, that he spent in the confessional in a church that was little protected from the damp, from the wind and from the cold, aggravated the illness so that it became incurable.

In September 1888 he wanted to return to Turin to pray at the tomb of Don Bosco, to pay his filial respects to the new Rector, Don Michael Rua,⁴ to make his retreat and to spend time with his confrères.

When he appeared at the Oratory everyone was filled with compassion seeing him so stricken and constantly feverish. However, he wanted to return to London even though he thought he might not have sufficient strength to complete

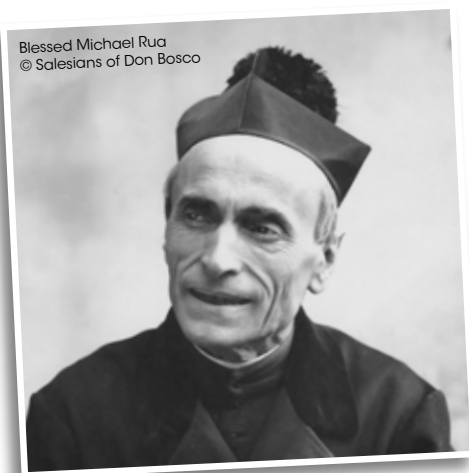
the journey. He was so determined. More than once he told his friends, "I want to work as long as I can, since my days are coming to a close."

Having arrived in London, although his illness continued to make serious inroads, he still tried to preach, hear confessions and visit the sick. But soon he had to stop this exercise of his priestly ministry. Nevertheless, he continued to write long letters to the Oratory. Only in the final day did he take to his bed. Don Rua had commissioned Bishop Cagliero, who was visiting the principal cooperators in France and Belgium, to visit the sick man, and he arrived on November 16. A few days earlier the Last Sacraments had been given to Fr MacKiernan. He was overjoyed to receive a visit from such a dear friend as the Salesian bishop, and he thanked the Superiors for their thoughtful concern. He could scarcely speak, and his words were interspersed with sobs. But in his resignation and deep faith he clearly spoke as the son of sturdy Irish stock so fervently Christian. Deeply moved, Bishop Cagliero said his farewells and returned to France on November 19.

Fr MacKiernan lived until the end of December, and it is impossible to describe his sufferings. He was the friend of the poor, who made up almost his entire mission, and the poor returned his affection. Each day some Catholics sent him some choice food, in some measure to relieve his sufferings.

December 30 was the last day of his life. Retaining full consciousness until the very last moment, he sent for his confrères and asked their pardon for any inconvenience incurred by his illness. Bursting into tears everyone asked his forgiveness if in any way they may have upset or displeased him. At 2 pm he again received Holy Viaticum and, without any further movement or word, after an hour he quietly breathed his last.

His body was laid out in his room. Gradually, especially towards evening, it was visited by



⁴ Fr Michael Rua SDB (1837–1910) was a boy at the Oratory, Turin and became a Salesian. He succeeded Don Bosco to be the first Superior General of the Salesians. He was beatified in 1972.

parishioners who loved and venerated the young priest. Men were seen to fall to their knees praying before the body, kissing it and going away sobbing, as though he were a son who had died.

Our Salesians found themselves in serious difficulties since the distance and very limited space in the church and their little house made even the most modest funeral impossible. However, the kindness of Fr Connolly saved them from embarrassment as he took upon himself the serious inconvenience and the cost of seeing to everything: inviting by telegram priests from various parts, providing all that was necessary for the church and for the lunch.⁵

On December 31, having spoken with Fr Macey,⁶ he went to the Bishop of Southwark, Bishop Butt,⁷ who, on account of his own poor health was unable to sing the Mass, but nonetheless, and against medical advice wanted to be present pontifically on January 3, the day arranged for the funeral. The good bishop, with four other priests, went there taking the necessary vestments which our own church did not have.

At 10.30 am the funeral carriage left our house followed by a good number of parishioners, those who could were dressed in mourning, and many in tears, and made its way to the parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel where the Mass was due to begin at 11.15 am.

This was celebrated by Fr Linnet, Fr Connolly's assistant, he too a good friend of ours. It was sung in Gregorian Chant by a number of priests. Several religious communities, including the Jesuits, Redemptorists, Servites, Passionists and Franciscans had sent representatives. The bishop presided at the Prayers of Absolution.

When the service was over the coffin was replaced on the bier and taken to the cemetery followed by two coaches with the confrères and Fr Linnet. Mortlake cemetery had been chosen because it was there that the religious had their graves. Having arrived there, the coffin was carried upon the shoulders and preceded by the altar server and the

priest wearing a cope was taken to the grave where it was at once lowered to the bottom. When the final prayers had been said, the confrères took it in turn to sprinkle holy water and then went away not without a great sense of loss as they had to leave behind there the remains of the one with whom they felt so united by ties of affection and gratitude. After them, several other people arrived by train to bid a last farewell to the one who on earth they so much loved and venerated.

I was very moved by reading this article. It sounds very live, fresh; and I think that because it is written so close to the death and burial of Fr McKiernan, it has an immediacy about it that even in our own day makes it feel like we are receiving 'breaking news.' I think it is written so personally that one can hear written into the text a tone that reveals that Fr McKiernan was very well known to the early Salesians, and that he was very highly thought of and deeply respected. I think it is not an exaggeration to say that he was very much loved.

The goodness and kindness, the self-sacrifice and generosity of the man shine out in the telling of his life and ministry as a Salesian priest in Turin and in London. What is very beautifully brought out for me is the significance of friends and friendship in the telling of his story, which after all is a key component of our Salesian spirituality. Upon seeing him in Turin, his friends are shocked by his very apparent ill health, and their care for him flows from them being 'filled with compassion.' He draws comfort



⁵ Fr William Joseph Connolly (1843–1896) was the parish priest of the neighbouring parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St Joseph, Battersea Park. In September 2016, the Battersea Park parish was entrusted to the Salesian community in Battersea. The parishes are served by a pastoral team of two Salesian priests and two deacons from the Archdiocese of Southwark.

⁶ Fr Charles Bernard Macey SDB (1854–1928), second Rector and parish priest in Battersea.

⁷ John Baptist Butt (1826–1899), fourth Bishop of Southwark (1885–1897).



from the visit of his friend, Bishop Cagliari⁸ and in the thoughtful regard of Don Rua in Turin. Then there is the kindness of the Battersea parishioners, friends who bring food to the impoverished Salesian community, and the friendship of the local diocesan clergy and religious, friends who provide everything for the funeral, even to the purchasing of the grave in the cemetery. It would seem that Fr McKiernan had understood, assimilated and lived out Don Bosco's famous words of advice to his Salesians, "strive to make yourself loved."⁹

However, what is not revealed in the article is that Fr McKiernan was an orphan who, at the age of sixteen years, had been sent by Bishop Conroy of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise¹⁰ to lodge with Don Bosco in Turin in 1876 with a view to becoming a priest and subsequently returning to Ireland. However, after the death of Bishop

Conroy two years later, the young Edward McKiernan found himself alone in a foreign country with no supporting benefactor in Ireland. Yet, during those two years at the Oratory in Valdocco, Edward had found in Don Bosco "a father, brother and friend."¹¹ He lived with Don Bosco at the Oratory for eleven years, seeing at first-hand Don Bosco's extraordinary work for young people, his particular style of pastoral ministry among young people and his unswerving dedication to educate them and to provide for them. Significantly, this was a profound experience of Salesian formation.

We might say that Don Bosco accompanied young people in the adventure of holiness, forming them to become saints in the ordinary routine of daily life, doing ordinary things extraordinarily well. A lesson learned and lived by St Dominic Savio, one of Don Bosco's boys. The same boy who dreamt of becoming a Salesian priest and of coming to England as a Salesian missionary.

Another Salesian, Fr Giuseppe Vespignani¹² recounts one of his conversations with Don Bosco:

I, perhaps imprudently, asked Don Bosco if there were in the Oratory at that time pupils or clerics who imitated the holiness of Dominic Savio.¹³ Don Bosco mentioned several of the former companions of Dominic Savio. Coming then to the boys who had recently been clothed with the clerical dress he named Edward McKiernan, an Irish lad, assuring me that this boy had nothing to envy in St Aloysius Gonzaga. When later I heard that this same McKiernan had been sent as the first Rector to London, that is to the scene of the dream of Dominic Savio, I could not help connecting the fact with the words of Don Bosco.¹⁴

⁸ Giovanni Cagliari (1838–1926) was a boy at the Oratory and became a Salesian priest. He led the first missionary group to Argentina in 1875 and was the first Salesian bishop in 1884; Apostolic Delegate to Nicaragua 1908–1915 and Cardinal Archbishop of Frascati in 1915.

⁹ St John Bosco, *Salesian Sources 1. Don Bosco and His Work, Collected works*, ed. Salesian Historical Institute (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti, 2017). Selected foundational writings and documents pertaining to Don Bosco, in 4 parts. 'Letter from Rome to the Salesian Community at the Oratory in Valdocco, Turin, (1884)', 506–507; 'The Preventive System in the Education of the Young: A word on punishments No 1, (1877)', 494; 'Regulations for the houses of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales, General Articles 2, (1877)', 623.

¹⁰ George Michael Conroy (1832–1878) Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise (1871–1877), Apostolic Delegate to Canada (1877–1878).

¹¹ *Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales, 3rd Edition* (Roma: Editrice SDB, 2015), n. 15, p.25.

¹² Fr Giuseppe Vespignani SDB (1854–1932).

¹³ Dominic Savio (1842–1857) was a boy at the Oratory, promoted by Don Bosco as an example of youthful holiness. Beatified in 1950 and canonised in 1954.

¹⁴ *SDB Deceased Confreres Vol. 1* (1888–1966), Provincial House, Bolton. Cited in the Obituary Letter for Fr Edward Patrick McKiernan SDB.

So, even as a teenager Edward McKiernan was regarded by St John Bosco as being as holy as Dominic Savio! That is quite an amazing statement indeed. And yet we should not really be too surprised, because we know that Don Bosco saw this as his mission and real work among young people, “it would be difficult to find someone who has a greater love for you in Jesus Christ, or a greater desire for your true happiness. I am devoted to you, because you hold in your hearts the treasure of virtue. With its possession you own everything.”¹⁵

Salesian saints are neither formed nor live in a vacuum; they become such from within the context of real life and that is what makes them inspirational for us. For both priest and people, Battersea was not an easy setting in which to live or work. It had a reputation for great social need resulting from low quality housing stock that was often overcrowded, poor sanitation, moral degradation, violence. In effect, Battersea was an area of real poverty. Sent by St John Bosco, and arriving at the home of Mrs Pash and her family at 26 Trott Street on November 16, 1887, Fr Edward McKiernan, Fr Charles Macey and Br Ignatio Rossaro¹⁶ found themselves in the context of a desperately poor parish in a deprived area.

The only letter of Fr McKiernan to survive is written to Countess Georgiana de Stacpoole,¹⁷ the purchaser of the land in Trott Street on which the corrugated iron church stood, the one who had contrived to get Don Bosco to send the Salesians to Battersea. In it, the immediate financial poverty of the community is simply and calmly stated by Fr McKiernan:

We are here at last, at your Church in Battersea, and Deo Gratias, we have taken a little house near the Church for which we pay 11/6d a week. We have furnished it with

the bare necessities, and this will cost us 40/- . We have a person who consented to let us have the goods on credit, as we have no money with us. Don Bosco charged us to write to you stating our actual position. We are destitute of everything. We do not complain on that account for we know that our condition is but that in which Don Bosco himself was placed at the beginning of his work ... We are obliged to rent a room for Fr Bourne¹⁸ at 5/- a week as ours is too small for 5 persons. In answer to the appeals which have weekly appeared in the Catholic journals, we have received nothing, and we must now pay for the publication. The persons of influence whom we have visited are delighted at our arrival, hoping of course, that we are going to open a house for boys, but they give us no financial help.¹⁹

It seems that his letter and another letter of Fr Macey, which also spoke of their lack of finances and accumulating debts, both written in those first few weeks of their arrival in Trott Street in November 1887, so enraged and infuriated the Countess that she could not be moved to support financially the fledgling work of the Salesians any further!²⁰



¹⁵ St John Bosco, ‘Introduction’ in id., *The Companion of Youth* (London, 1938), 4.

¹⁶ Br Ignatio Rossaro SDB (1861–?) was a cook and returned to Italy from where he left the Salesians in 1900.

¹⁷ Countess Georgiana de Stacpoole was the daughter of Richard Fitzgeorge de Stacpoole, 1st Duc de Stacpoole, and Elizabeth Tulloch. She was appointed to the Noble Canoness Order of St Anne of the Convent of Noble Ladies of Munich by the Queen of Bavaria in 1850.

¹⁸ Francis Alphonsus Bourne (1861–1935) welcomed the Salesians to London on November 16, 1887, having visited Don Bosco a number of times. Ordained Bishop of Southwark (1896–1903) and transferred as Archbishop of Westminster (1903–1935), made Cardinal in 1911.

¹⁹ William John Dickson, *The Dynamics of Growth: The foundation and development of the Salesians in England* (Roma: LAS, 1991), 96.

²⁰ For a more detailed survey of all the relevant correspondence see: Dickson, *The Dynamics of Growth*, 96–99.

However, the hardship of poor living conditions and difficulties of having serious worries about money did not deter Fr McKiernan and his companions from generously ministering as Salesians in Battersea. Don Rua writes in a very positive and encouraging way to Fr McKiernan in March 1888, "Good that you are getting young people together on Thursdays. Do everything you can to step up their number."²¹

As parish priest, Fr McKiernan ensured that Mass was celebrated and that he was always available to celebrate the Sacrament of Confession. His experience of having lived with Don Bosco had taught him the supreme importance of the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation in accompanying young people in their growth of the Christian life. He visited the lapsed, the sick and the dying with great attention and care. Young people who expressed an interest in becoming Salesians were given great encouragement and support. He established associations in the parish which brought people together for prayer, catechesis and charitable works. Feast days were celebrated with special attention and they were moments of happiness and joy in a harsh and often unkind environment.

Poverty, ill health and generous hard work undoubtedly took their toll and Fr Edward Patrick McKiernan died aged only twenty-eight years. To the secular mind this ending may seem like a total disaster, or a sad waste, but not so to the one who sees with the eye of faith.



A great friend of that first community, Fr Henri Galeran, the parish priest of St Thomas's, Wandsworth, wrote to Don Rua:

His death will be a loss and a gain: we lose a worthy priest but at the same time the grain falls into the ground for the growing period. There is no better foundation stone than the stone which is the tomb of a priest and religious.²²

Indeed, these are the words of a man of faith. The foundation stone of the work of the Salesians of Don Bosco in the UK is indeed the tomb or the grave of Fr McKiernan. He is that grain of wheat fallen into the ground which dies and whose offering of himself to the Lord produces a rich harvest.

When the Salesians arrived in Battersea they had nothing, and the earliest years of the Province were marked by great poverty. But it is abundantly clear to see today that the ministry and the pastoral outreach of the Salesian community has grown and prospered through these past 130 years: recall the pastoral and sacramental ministry in the parishes of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St Joseph; and the pastoral and educational ministry at St John Bosco College, the Sacred Heart Primary School and St Mary's Primary School, Battersea; a Salesian community at the service of the local community and area; think of the House of Formation for the Salesians in the UK, as well as it offering a centre for academic studies within the Salesian Congregation at the worldwide level; consider the collaborative ministry with the various members of the Salesian family: the Salesian Sisters, Salesian Cooperators, Association of Mary Help of Christians, the volunteers of Don Bosco and the past pupils; and a vibrant ecumenical ministry of Christian witness and service with the local Anglican church at St Mary's Parish, Battersea.

There is already so much to give thanks for to God that is the fruit of the spirit of generosity and self-sacrifice of those pioneers of the Salesian mission in the UK. The legacy we have received from Don Bosco of being signs and bearers of God's love, especially to young people, is rich with God's grace and love and that is why we look to the future with great confidence and hope.

²¹ Michael Rua, *Letters to the Confreres of the English Province (1887-1909): Introduction, critical text and notes*, ed. M McPake and WJ Dickson, (Roma: LAS, 2009). part of Salesian Historical Institute's series 'Fonti', second series, XI, 32, Letter to Fr Edward McKiernan, March 26, 1888.

²² Letter of Fr Henri Galeran (1833–1915) to Don Rua dated November 11, 1888 cited in Dickson, *The Dynamics of Growth*, 103.

By especially recalling today the memory of Fr McKiernan we ask him to pray for us that we may continue to reach out to others in faithful service; to build bridges of kindness, friendship and trust; to be a welcoming and hospitable community that invites others to the happiness of knowing Jesus and the joy of his Gospel, and also may I suggest to the possibility of living out this Christian way of life particularly as a Salesian of Don Bosco or as a Salesian Sister.



I want to offer one final reflection that seems to echo my thoughts about where we have come from and our present day direction of travel. Once again, these are very much the words of a man of faith, the reflection of a true contemplative in action. It is popularly attributed

to Archbishop Óscar Romero, the martyred bishop of San Salvador, who was canonised October 14, 2018 in Rome by Pope Francis.

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

*The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision.*

*We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.*

*Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying
that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.*

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No programme accomplishes the Church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.



The Provincial Fr. Gerry Briody SDB and the preacher Fr. Kieran Anderson SDB at the blessing of the restored grave.

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*That is what we are about.
We plant a seed that will one day grow.
We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects
far beyond our capabilities.*

*We cannot do everything,
and there is a sense of liberation in realising that.
This enables us to do something,
and to do it very well.*

*It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning,
a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord's grace
to enter and do the rest.*

*We may never see the end results,
but that is the difference
between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders,
ministers, not messiahs.*

We are prophets of a future not our own.²³

Kieran Anderson SDB

²³ www.rcsouthwark.co.uk/romero_prayer.html [accessed March 7, 2019].



SPREADING THE ‘Gospel of Don Bosco’

My teaching experience reminds me of Don Bosco as a young priest at the height of the Industrial Revolution, and how in the toughest of situations, he had to tackle the problems of poor young people. The young are always the most vulnerable and open to exploitation.

'Delocalisation' was probably not a word in the dictionary of Don Bosco's time, but it was by 2017. It is a word coined by the Kenya Teachers' Service Commission, my employer, to describe the transfer of teachers from their home county to other areas.

'Delocalisation' was to start first with head teachers. It targeted those head teachers who had been working in their home county for a long time. I knew I would be one of the first to move! And why not? I had been in the Makuyu area and at the same school for more than half of my life and I had tried earlier to seek a transfer to another school (within the Makuyu area) but without success. I had lived my life to the full; I loved my job and my pupils, and together we had made our school a Centre of Excellence.

They say that a change is as good as a rest; but I almost began to think otherwise when I found myself at Kaloleni Primary School, in Yatta Subcounty in Machakos County. I reported to my new school on the 2nd May, 2018. The 65 kilometre journey from Makuyu worried me at first. But there were more shocking surprises in store for me. Everything was totally different from my former school. There were family crises affecting many of the children; absenteeism, drugs, sexual immorality, truancy, hunger etc. The list was long. I must admit, I was scared by what faced me! I felt like Maria in the "Sound of Music" but I knew that I was needed there.

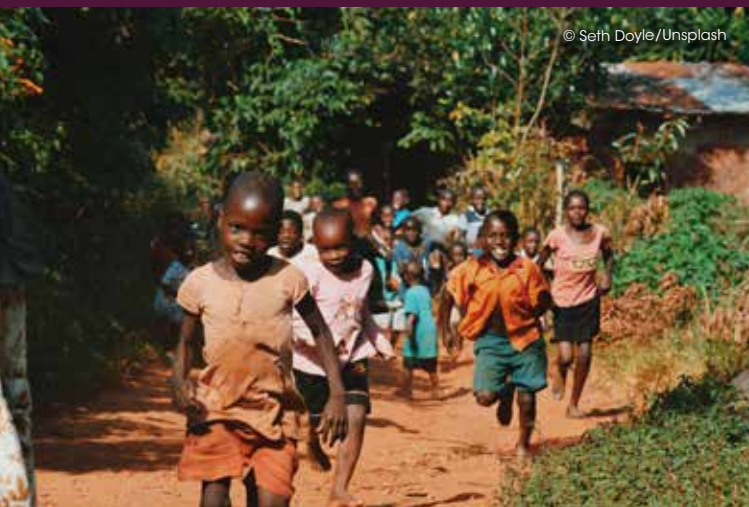
There had been moments in the past, when I had found myself desperately asking, like the Pharisees in Luke Chapter 17, "Where is the Kingdom of God?" On three occasions I had requested a move, (of course to another school within

Makuyu!) and I had continued my work there in hope that through Mother Mary's intercession, God would show me whether in fact he was calling me to move on to a different school – or to the next level of management.

"For behold, the Kingdom of God is among you" (Luke 17:21) Rather than encouraging us to seek the Kingdom of God somewhere else, sometimes Jesus gently reminds us that we already live within "the Kingdom". Both in moments of stillness and in time of change, Jesus lights up the sky from one side to the other assuring us that the Kingdom of God has no limits; that it is wherever we are.

I knew from the start that I had to introduce the Preventive System of Don Bosco into my new school. At first, to the teachers that sounded an impossible task. But these poor children needed someone to appreciate and love them. They needed spiritual and physical nourishment too. On the day I took over the control of the school I read on the dilapidated school notice board that the school was "Catholic-sponsored". Upon enquiry, I learnt that there was nothing "Catholic" about the school apart from what was displayed on the notice board.

I soon learned that most of the parents of our children lived from hand to mouth – doing casual work on the nearby large farms or at a large local quarry. Most only managed to provide an evening meal. Some of the children would run away from the school to work in the nearby quarry. Those who remained in class dozed all the time! This was one very sad experience for me, and I took to sharing my lunch every day with a few of the children.





I knew from the start that I had to introduce the Preventive System of Don Bosco into my new school ... these poor children needed someone to appreciate and love them.

Hungry children cannot learn and here I was in a new school with no one to turn to for help. I had several hungry children with disability who lived at the school. Being the “daughter” of a beggar (Don Bosco!), I knew it was time for me to perfect the art of begging! My former high-school friends agreed to help me and brought us some highly-fortified porridge flour, a cupful of which sustains a child for a whole day, even without other food.

This is how I gradually managed to reduce absenteeism. I also arranged with the local Parish Priest, Fr Alex Ndeti, (who has really become a huge support for the school), to have Mass for the whole school. We started by attending Mass fortnightly and later every week. The parents embraced this initiative wholeheartedly.

I also made it a habit to remind the pupils at every assembly that, “in case nobody told you today, then I am telling you now, that I love you all, and you are my children.” (I had always done this in my former school.) Most of these children are unloved and voiceless, and they were overworked like adults.

Within a month, we had bonded and I could feel the positive vibes coming through. I had to befriend the children and make them feel important. Don Bosco had taught me a huge lesson, that “it is not sufficient to love the young; they must know that they are loved.” I had to keep insisting on this with the teachers.

I remember sharing with some of our (Salesian) Priests, telling them how happy I was, working among the very poor and disadvantaged. I feel so fulfilled and am really hopeful for many miracles ahead. Two weeks after taking over, I was faced with two huge challenges. I ran to the empty church: I couldn’t pray: I just fell on my knees and cried, facing the Blessed Sacrament and asking Jesus some hard questions, heart speaking to heart. When I finally calmed down, I sat on the front pew, and gazed towards the sanctuary. There were these two statues of Mother Mary, one on either side, and a huge poster of Our Lady of Consolata! What a relief! What a consolation!

Here she was! My intercessor! Just as Mary Help of Christians had been for Don Bosco. I knew I had to cling to this woman. Later I shared with our Parish Priest my wish that we should ‘Catholicise’ our school, and that we

should start by renaming it as part of our 'rebranding'. 'Our Lady of Victory – Kaloleni', this is our new name! And Mary has really been busy for us; I cannot count the many doors that have opened for us since then.

As we closed this year, there were many visible changes: from disciplined, happier and healthier children to a motivated staff. And for me the distance to Makuyu suddenly became shorter! It was all about attitude. I feel energised and fulfilled. I feel like it's my first teaching job. I am happy. I am excited. The children love me, and I can see it in their eyes. In the evenings, I spend time with the physically and mentally challenged who live in the 'Small Home' at the school. I am teaching them how to pray and there's no greater joy than being with them.

In the midst of my 'new set of babies' in Ukambani, I feel completely at home and I don't mind spending my life among them . . . they share true joy and have taught me to be content. I have experienced overwhelming support from the parents of our children – their presence when I invite them to school and their ready smiles. I am no longer a stranger; I am one with them in their parenting and the on-going formation of our children.

I will be an advocate for them and for justice from the cruel world around them. In these children I see a future so bright it almost blinds me!!

Guess what, it's this Lady – the same one who walked with Don Bosco two centuries ago! She is walking with us, beside us, behind us and certainly living among us . . . and so rich in promise!

Our Lady of Victory, pray for us!

The writer has been a head teacher in Makuyu and has worked with the Salesians for over 20 years. She has served as the Chairperson of the SEPC at Don Bosco, Embu, and is still a member. She is currently heading Our Lady of Victory Primary School in Yatta, Machakos.

I made it a habit to remind the pupils at every assembly that, 'in case nobody told you today, then I am telling you now, that I love you all, and you are my children.'





125TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONSECRATION OF THE CHURCH OF THE SACRED HEART, BATTERSEA

It is wonderful to have this opportunity to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the consecration of the Church of the Sacred Heart, together with the Battersea parish and Battersea Salesian communities. As well as being significant for the parish community, this is a deeply significant event in the establishing of the Salesian Province of St Thomas of Canterbury in Great Britain.

In welcoming the current Vicar of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Fr Francesco Cereda SDB, to this celebration we are commemorating the presence of Fr Michael Rua, the first successor of Don Bosco, at the consecration of the Church of the Sacred Heart in 1893. This event, also attended by the general council of the congregation, was seen as a highly important development for the nascent Salesian Society of the time. Don Bosco held the insight that a presence in England was an essential step to opening up the English-speaking world to Salesian missionaries. This proved prescient as Salesians from the UK subsequently became missionaries in India, China, Oceania and parts of Africa including South Africa.

The Sacred Heart parish was the first Salesian work established in England. The fact that this first initiative was in a parish setting carries its own significance. Don Bosco was famous in northern Italy for establishing his 'Oratory' structures, which were part parish, school, playground and home. These were often set up in advance of him establishing dedicated centres of education and training.

Writing in modern times, the Salesian historian Giraudo states that the educational success of the Oratory "lies in its dynamic communication",¹ while its "religious inspiration is clear". Religion is seen to be key in the sense that "it involves the whole educational action, shapes the formative community, and motivates and nourishes the inner life of young people."² The key outcome, which can be easily missed, is that while growing up in this "global communicative environment", young people gradually assimilate its values.

For the word 'Oratory' in this description, we could just as easily substitute 'parish' since Salesian parishes operated with more than half an eye on the opportunity to advance the faith and educational development of all, with a particular focus on young people whom Don Bosco described as "that

¹ A. Giraudo, *The Christian Education of Youth*, Salesian Forum, 2016. Presentation.

² *ibid.*



part of human society which is so exposed and yet so rich in promise.” In fact, the promotion of what Don Bosco called ‘Good Christians and honest citizens’ became the identikit of a unique educational project in parishes and schools with religion at its heart. For Don Bosco, devotion and morality were the ultimate goals of his educational endeavour.

Long before such practices became acceptable, he encouraged young people, who had made their first communion and who had prepared appropriately through regular confession, to approach the sacrament of the Eucharist on a regular basis. He was very much against delaying young people receiving their first communion as he believed this left them open to all kinds of bad influences. Those who had made their first communion, on the other hand, he saw as being open to deepening their knowledge and understanding of God. Giraudo states this very clearly when he says that the call to frequent communion is connected with the invitation to live constantly in a worthy manner. As Giraudo explains: “Don Bosco connects together the eucharistic devotion, the sensibility of young souls, the decision to imitate Christ, and the ethical and virtuous commitment in daily life.”³

The fact that this can all take place in a parish setting is no surprise. Don Bosco often initiated his work in deprived communities which were located in districts made up of a number of parishes. While his oratories often served young people from these local parishes, they were also open to all-comers so long as they respected the rules and dynamics of the Oratory which were rooted in reason, religion and loving kindness.

Don Bosco’s dream of Salesians working to build up the Church in England was realised in the construction of the wonderful Church of the Sacred Heart, built and paid for within six years of the arrival of the Salesians in Trott Street. The fact that it was paid for allowed it to be consecrated with great solemnity soon after its completion.

In a very different age, we pay tribute to those wise Salesians, starting with Don Bosco, who first envisioned a Salesian mission in England and his immediate successor Don Rua who realised that vision. We also remember the part played by the Countess de Stacpoole, Prince Czartoryski and the many other donors who financed the building of this magnificent church.

³ *ibid.*



In the intervening time, the Salesian mission has developed across England, Scotland and Ireland. Recent developments in Battersea have seen the building of a new state of the art secondary school, St John Bosco College, a new community house which is able to accommodate students and groups of young people from Salesian centres across the world, the development of a new parish centre and, following the request of the Archbishop of Southwark, the acceptance of a second parish. While structures and buildings are important, it is the people who occupy them and the spirit with which they go about their ministry that truly matters.

In his reflection on the place of the Oratory (parish, playground, home and school) as a model of Salesian work, Giraudo concludes: "Therefore we need a community of educators sharing the same imagination, the same communicative and organisational skills, the same 'passion' and pastoral charity as Don Bosco."⁴

While we give thanks for the work that has been inspired by successive generations of Salesians, Salesian Sisters and co-workers in Battersea, we also have great faith in the future of

this work as the mission is opened up to wider collaborations with partner organisations working in the Battersea area. The mission of the Salesians and the Sisters and their co-workers to deliver the educational vision of St John Bosco and St Mary Mazzarello continues. This involves working together, with shared values, in a truly educational and pastoral community.

Let us pray that this enterprise, led by a dynamic spirit of collaboration, will continue for a further hundred years. It is our sincere hope that the young people of Battersea will continue to be the focus of this mission and Don Bosco's exhortation that they should "not only be loved, but that they should know that they are loved", will be its inspiration.

With confidence in this understanding, we trust that young people will be empowered to go forward in their lives as 'good Christians and honest citizens', able to earn their bread and to contribute to the building up of the Church and of society.

Gerry Briody SDB
Provincial

⁴ *ibid.*





SR KATHLEEN JONES FMA

1927–2018

"I will tell of the kindness of the Lord!"

It is not often one can begin to write a longer life of one of our Sisters with an account that comes from them; however, this is the case with Sr Kathleen.



Known for being a woman of wisdom, few words and great prudence, in 2016 she left a signed copy which gives us a first insight of some of the important, significant moments in her life. It is reported below largely as she wrote it: as always, simply and in the third person. This obituary includes direct quotations from the document signed by Sr Kathleen.

Kathleen was born on 19th June 1927 in Clapham, London. She was the first of six children, three girls and three boys, of Daniel Wilfred Jones and Kathleen Hovenden. Both parents belonged to the Parish of the Sacred Heart, West Battersea, administered by the Salesian Fathers, where they were married and Kathleen Baptised. Her godfather was William Sullivan, who had tried his vocation with the Salesians but left before Ordination.

We know a little of Sr Kathleen's parents. Her father, Daniel, was born in Battersea. His family lived next door to the Salesians in Orbel Street. Her mother, Kathleen, was born in Quetta, then part of India, her father being part of the British Army and was stationed there at the time of her birth. She came to London as a small child and also lived in Orbel Street. Both parents knew Fr Macey, the first SDB Provincial and a very influential and important figure in the history of the development of the British Province. They also knew some of the first Salesians. So, from the first one could say Kathleen had a very strong link with the SDB community in Battersea through her parents. She met some of the Salesians who had known Don Bosco: Fr McCarthy, Fr McLaughlin and Fr Tozzi. She comments elsewhere:

I feel that as I had known about Don Bosco since my childhood and had contact with Salesianity through my family, he wanted me among his daughters.

After her parents married, they went to live in Clapham at Elms Road, but the Salesian link continued since both sets of parents lived in Battersea and her father sang in the Sacred Heart Church choir.

After the birth of the first boy, Daniel Patrick, the family moved to Balham, a short bus ride away from Battersea. Here the family grew up. The third child, Sheila was born with Down syndrome, and this at times made family life difficult. She eventually became an inpatient at Fountains Hospital in Tooting, dying there on 12th November 1942.

When Kathleen was five years old, she started school which was attached to the Parish of the Holy Ghost and was later followed by her sister Barbara and her brother Daniel. Kathleen did well at school passing the Junior County Scholarship and moved to La Retraite Secondary School in Clapham Park in 1938. This was a time of great uncertainty due to the threat of war with Germany, and while there had been a threat of evacuation, none of the Jones' children were evacuated. Kathleen attended emergency classes set up at La Retraite.

In May 1940, the whole family moved to Rhyl where their father was. While here, Kathleen attended Rhyl Grammar School, a non-denominational school run by Flintshire County Council. For two years she was a boarder at the Convent School in Conway, this being possible thanks to a legacy received by the family. Kathleen herself tells us that it was here she first began thinking about religious life.

When the war ended in 1945, Kathleen was eighteen years old. She passed exams in English, French, Latin, maths and economics. She then applied and was accepted at Mount Pleasant Teacher Training College in Liverpool for the two-year course for senior school teachers. Her specialist subjects were maths, scripture and handcrafts. During her time at college she thought about joining the Sisters of Notre Dame. She was supported in this thought by several other students who, Kathleen told us, were also considering this.

The Principal at the time, Mother Canavan, comments in her final written letter of commendation for Kathleen to take up work in education, that Kathleen took the two-year course in religious knowledge and obtained a First Class in the religious examination.

She further states: "Miss Jones will be a very capable teacher of seniors. She is thorough and conscientious in the preparation of her work and brings the same spirit of industry to the classroom.

"She is a person of high moral principles and real stability of character. These gifts added to that of a keen intelligence will ensure that Miss Jones does excellent work with any students whose intellectual and moral training should be entrusted to her."

The family moved back to London where Kathleen began her teaching career. Her first post was in a county school, but she quickly moved to the school of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, East Battersea where the headteacher was a Notre Dame Sister. Despite her strong links with the Sisters of Notre Dame, in September 1947, Kathleen joined the Salesian Sisters.

It seems important to note here that Sr Kathleen always remained close to her large family, very close to her sister Barbara and her husband John, who at the time of writing, remain in Chertsey. She keenly followed their four sons. Nicholas sadly died of multiple sclerosis aged only forty, leaving behind a wife and two children; Simon, now Brother John Bosco, a member of the Congregation of the Franciscan Brothers of the Renewal, of whom she was quietly very proud; Richard, a surveyor and Jonathan the youngest, who now lives in Wales with one daughter. He was the first child baptised in St Anne's Church Chertsey during the Sunday Mass. Through them she kept close links with the parish and people of Chertsey.

Kathleen had always been used to seeing the Salesian Sisters at Mass in the Sacred Heart Parish Battersea but did not really know any of them until she began college. During that time, she undertook some teaching practice in the parish primary school and got to know a few sisters, among whom was Sr Frances Pedrick. She was fortunate enough also to know some of our early sisters who can be considered pioneers, among whom were Sr Mary Botto, Sr Teresa Noe, Sr Concetta Demartini and Sr Mary Gotto.

Soon after beginning her teaching career, she got involved with both the Girls' Club, which met after school, and the Sunday Oratory. She met a number of sisters, including Sr Agnes Powell, who ran the club, and among the girls who attended was Mary Ballard, who was also thinking of joining the sisters. Sr Frances took Kathleen to Chertsey to visit the

Provincial House and boarding school one weekend. The Battersea Sunday Oratory enjoyed an outing to Elmthorpe, Cowley, and Kathleen went with them. At about this time Kathleen also got to know a number of Salesians from whom she received encouragement to try her desire for religious life with the sisters.

On September 8, 1948, Kathleen travelled to Chertsey to begin her Aspirantate, and in the following January begin her Postulancy. After this she moved to Cowley for her Noviciate on August 5, 1949. Unusually, even for those days, there was a need for science teachers and so she attended Oxford Technical College to prepare to take her Intermediate BSc. Kathleen made her first profession on August 5, 1951 in Cowley.

Interestingly following this, she was sent to Hastings for two weeks to carry out some supply work assisting the children in our school there, after which she was sent to Chertsey where she taught in the senior school, which had just moved to Sandgates on Guildford Road. This was a new community on the outskirts of the town at that time. She returned to Eastworth Road where she joined the community for supper and prayer then, while marking and preparing her lessons for the next day, she assisted the boarders with their homework in the study hall. Throughout the week, recreation, Saturday games and Sunday walks with the boarders kept her very busy.

After two years in Chertsey Kathleen was transferred to Battersea, London, to teach in the Sacred Heart Elementary School. During this time she also attended Norwood Technical College to obtain further qualifications. She then returned to Chertsey and became a fulltime student at London University's Holloway College. Here she followed the BSc course gaining her degree in maths, physics and chemistry. While studying for the degree, Kathleen also taught part time for the last two years.

In 1964 the senior secondary school which had begun in Sandgates but had been relocated to a new site and built further up Guildford Road, became a maintained grammar school named St John Bosco. Sr Rose Murphy who was headteacher became ill and Sr Kathleen was appointed to replace her. During her time as headteacher, she was involved in running a school for Catechists among the sixth formers. She was also a member of the National Catholic Youth Committee and of the Deanery Vocation Group.

Apart from her ministry in school, she worked with Sr Maria Rizzi and the community of Sandgates in offering various clubs, activities and special events to the young. In this she was supported by our Salesian Fathers, living at that time in Highfield Road. One of them attests that her openness, support and the family atmosphere she helped create within the community made this an extremely happy time for him and helped develop and sustain his and others' priestly vocations.

In the early 1970s the proposed construction of the new M25 through Sandgates—the sisters' property on which the new school was situated—caused great concern. As the school needed more accommodation it was decided to construct a 'buffer' building to minimise the noise that would be caused by the motorway. When this building was finished Kathleen performed the 'topping out' ceremony. The school was already privy to a daily disturbance due to Concorde flying over, with the inevitable ear-piercing noise!

The change in status of the school in 1971 when it amalgamated with the Salesian College based at Highfield Road, to become the mixed comprehensive Salesian School with Fr O'Shea as headteacher and Sr Kathleen as deputy headteacher, coincided with the construction of the M25.

Fr Gilheney replaced Fr O'Shea in 1980, with Sr Kathleen continuing as deputy until 1990 when she retired, having been appointed Provincial. At the end of her long service to education, and before her change of role she was presented with the Rector Major's medal. In the letter accompanying the medal sent to her by Don Chavez he says:

"I am very pleased to associate myself with the many expressions of gratitude and appreciation for all you have done over so many years for countless members of staff, girls, boys and indeed whole families. It is with great pleasure that I offer you this medal of St John Bosco as a mark of appreciation not only on behalf of the Governors of the Salesian School at Chertsey, but also of your many Salesian brothers."

She then moved to Eastworth Road, the Provincial House at that time. She attended the 1990 General Chapter spending quite a long period in Rome.

In spring 1996 the house in Eastworth Road was sold to the SDB and the Provincial Offices moved to Streatham, London. Kathleen's term of office as Provincial ended in August 1996. During her time as Provincial, she guided the Province with wisdom and hard work. As the sister who was designated provincial secretary had to go home to help her parents, Sr Kathleen also acted as provincial secretary. She tried to develop the gifts of each sister alongside the needs of the Province. From the autumn of 1996, Kathleen had a sabbatical year which she spent mainly in Battersea, using the time to translate the Acts of the General Chapter at which she was the provincial delegate. (She did spend about a month in Ireland working on this document with Sr Maire O'Byrne in Cahiracon). She also completed other translations and followed a correspondence course in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

Two years in Rotherhithe followed, during which she taught part time in the Bosco Centre. She was then appointed provincial bursar in 2006, replacing Sr Mary Louise Ballard, so she moved back to Streatham. Here, she was also nominated community leader. She remained here until 2010 when the house closed and she returned to Rotherhithe where she was nominated bursar until in 2014, that house also closed and she moved to Cowley, with no specific responsibilities. She continued to keep in touch with the Streatham cooperators whose delegate she had been while in Streatham.

She did not find her retirement in Cowley easy but tried as was her wont to find ways to help others, to keep abreast of the news political, financial and provincial. She also kept her mind active by attempting the daily crossword for as long as she was able. Her deteriorating health was a suffering to her which she quietly offered to the Lord in her time spent in his presence daily.

Her death when it came was almost unexpected but seems to have been connected to a fall she had some time earlier. The love and support of both her sisters and the wonderful Cowley carers helped her in her final difficult journey home to the Lord on the feast of the Presentation.

Having given this very insightful and thorough account of her life so typically presented by Sr Kathleen herself, stripped of all but the essentials, I think it helpful to try to see the woman she was perceived to be by many others who have shared their memories of her.

One of our Salesian Fathers who worked closely with Sr Kathleen for a great number of years had this to say:

"She did her job whatever it was at the time, with thoroughness competence and great generosity. She was in the

unforgettable comment of one of her colleagues, 'intensely loyal and so awfully nice. She carried authority gracefully. She beavered away in the background ... Her life has been one of service and she took a quiet pride in what she was able to do. I have always held that the first principle of all pastoral care is presence—being there—and Sr Kathleen was always there.'

In 2010 Sr. Kathleen wrote:

The Lord has been very good to me, he has blessed me with good health which enabled me to carry out an active ministry among the young and then among my Sisters. He has always been near me and I have been conscious of his presence, especially during difficult times. My Sisters in the province have helped and supported me at all stages of my life and I thank them for this.

In the Salesian School's newsletter, her passing is remembered in the following words:

"Sr Kathleen will always be remembered for her quiet warmth, her unflinching and unflagging devotion, her wonderful loyalty to the Salesian ideal of service to the young."

Sr Kathleen was well known for her dedication to duty. She was a woman of few words but those few were well worth listening to! Sometimes her rather stern exterior could veil the caring and compassionate woman she was.

This caring person received many tributes at her death, some of which I include to show how she was seen during her sixty-three years of dedicated service of the Lord. One sister remembers:

"I joined the staff as a maths teacher and I stayed in Chertsey for 14 years, during which time I got to know Sr Kathleen. I found her strict but very fair, showing an understanding of the pupils and wanting them to do well. She knew the background and difficulties some of them faced and she offered them advice.

"As a member of staff, I found Sr Kathleen very fair in her treatment of staff, encouraging when things were difficult. She acted with a sense of humour and was always ready to take on the hard work herself. I can picture her clearing the stacking chairs in the hall after a parents' evening.

"It was in community that I found Sr Kathleen to be a great example. I think that she preferred not to be community leader, but when she was given that task, she listened without judgement and made me feel no matter what mistakes I made, she valued me as a sister FMA. I always had great respect for her—the fact that she sometimes let slip a flash of anger made her more real. I think she practised heroic virtue."

The following is from a past pupil:

"Sr Kathleen was my headmistress at my senior school in Chertsey some 50 years ago. I remember that she led the school in an almost inconspicuous way, non-confrontational, and that a certain level of behaviour was expected rather than ordered. I recall that in those days she had no school rules, saying that we knew what was right and wrong and how to behave. Indeed we did! It must have been a very challenging position, but she kept the respect of all the pupils I knew; even my wayward brother, whom she managed to steer gently on the right path ... and he remembers her with great affection."

Another sister affirms:

"For us she was the example of a true Salesian Sister faithful to the teachings of Don Bosco and St Mary Mazzarello."

A few comments posted on Facebook after her death are very telling in helping us to see how she is remembered:

Truly a wonderful woman, teacher and witness to young people.

Gosh! Is that THE Sr Kathleen ... she was a remarkable, inspirational lady.

A lovely lady and a great headmistress.

What an upright woman. Thank you for your witness and kindness.

She was a very caring head teacher and really helped me believe in myself.

I have always been grateful to her for the support she gave me in my first teaching role in Chertsey.

A gentle soul.

She was one tough lady.

I loved my time with Sr Kathleen at the Salesian School in Chertsey.

Fabulous headmistress.

A wonderful, devoted sister.

Deeply remembered and loved.

I can still picture Sr Kathleen preparing the school for the annual Fun Day for juniors when groups of youngsters from our communities descended on the school for a day of fun, games and Salesian formation! How she enjoyed this despite all the extra work it gave her and the Sandgates community!

When it was decided to close the community in Jamaica Road, Sr Kathleen and I had quite a lot of fun. Being the only two left in the house during the day, we started together to clear the loft, me up the ladder throwing things down to Sr Kathleen; the discoveries of items going back forty years caused a lot of laughter, for despite her solemn mien, she had a good, even wicked sense of humour.

Intensely private, until one got to know her—a woman of deep faith, prayer and loyalty to the Institute and a good, much missed friend and mentor

It is never easy to put on paper words that adequately capture anyone's life, but Sr Kathleen's long and very full life makes this an even more daunting task. All that can be done is to give a flavour of the person and trust that this will inspire the reader to give thanks to the Lord, who gave her a long and active life in his service. Old age they say is like a bank account ... you withdraw from it what you have put in ... Sr Kathleen trusted in the Lord, banked up a wonderful account, as she faithfully lived her vows saying daily:

It's all in your hands Lord. I hold nothing back for myself. Use me for the sake of the kingdom you came to establish.

In thanking the Lord for Sr Kathleen, her life of dedication and service to the apostolate of the young and to her province community, we pray that she now knows in all its fullness the love of God for her in Jesus and the reward he has promised.

I conclude with the words spoken at her funeral:

"Thank you, Kathleen, you will be greatly missed."

Pat Devine FMA

“

You, dear young people, are not the future but the now of God.

He invites you and calls you in your communities and cities to go out and find your grandparents, your elders: to stand up and with them to speak out and realise the dream that the Lord has dreamed for you.

”

Final Mass Homily of Pope Francis – 27 Jan, 2019



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