



adventure – fishing, hunting and trekking; catching reptiles and having close encounters with bison, wild cats and other wild animals in the forests of Sulcorna.

As James goes down the memory lane, he recounts his first experience of the Salesians – Fr Moja, the man with the long beard, and Bro. Ludvick, the great farmer. But his interest and admiration for Salesian life was inspired by Fr Daniel Venia who was known among the workers as 'Chicken Father'. James spent many years of his childhood in the company of this great man who showed special affection for this lively child. Fr Venia lived a life of simplicity, always trusting in the providence of God which he expressed through his constant refrain, "No problem!"

James grew up in the Salesian boarding at Sulcorna even when his family moved out of the place for a short while. Initially, James had a great interest in being a CID inspector. Though he was good in sports and studies, he confesses that he lacked self-confidence. He distinctly remembers how

on one sports day he had made up his mind to settle down for the 2nd place on seeing some African sprinters on the track. To his surprise he bagged the gold medal and was also declared the sportsman. It was during the same year, some Salesians came to give a vocation talk. But James was not among the 12 boys who responded. Fr Michael Mascarenhas, the Rector of Sulcorna, who was transferred to Fatorda invited James along with a few other boys to do their technical studies.

After 2 years of technical studies, Fr Michael encouraged James to go to Lonavla. Without considering much, he agreed. The superiors found him good and he was sent to the novitiate. It was here that James came to understand his Salesian vocation. For eight months he suffered with a thorn in his leg in spite of all medical care. At this time he was told "If your leg has not healed, you will not be able to make your profession". However, from March 19th (the day the applications are submitted) to 24th May (day of 1st profession) the leg gave no trouble. James made his profession but the leg

would continue to trouble him for another 8 months until one day while playing basketball a piece of the thorn came out by itself never to trouble him again.

After the magisterio course in Kalyani, Calcutta Province, Bro. James completed his practical training in Matunga and Pinguli while also completing his CTI (Central Training Institute) during those years. Having completed his diploma in polytechnic, he is presently pursuing his engineering studies while being fully involved in the Salesian apostolate at Don Bosco Fatorda.

James accepts that though he may not have consciously made a decision to be a Salesian brother he is most happy to be one. He finds it easy to be with the young, sharing their lives, listening to their stories, helping them to unburden themselves, guiding them in their life decisions, and encouraging them to go on. He says, "As a priest, I wouldn't have had all this time for the young". He feels totally at home with the poor, especially youngsters coming from deprived situations.

