

Goodnight by the Provincial of FRB

The Salesian Youth Movement in FRB Province

A. How to get from a group of 4 young people to one of 11 in 6 years?

2004: European *Confronto* (Youth event) at Colle Don Bosco. There were 4 young people in the French delegation, plus one FMA and an SDB. These 4 young people were confused: how could they share what they were going through at the time with other young people, when they came back to France? The oldest one of them went about setting up the Salesian Youth Movement in the Province and declared so to the administration .

Two week-ends a year were suggested for over 17 year-olds;

- One week-end for taking another look at the leadership/animation procedures for youth of this age
- One week-end of pedagogical and spiritual formation.

Positive points over this five year period, 2004-2009;

1. The enthusiasm and common dream of the first four youngsters thanks to the power of the initiation they had had at the *Confronto*
2. Shared accompaniment by SDB and FMA and these young people
3. The great trust put in the young people despite their small numbers

Difficulties over these five years, 2004-2009

1. Scepticism on the part of those responsible for leadership in the province at the time: "What does it mean having a national/provincial movement with less than 8 young people?"
2. Lack of credence or trust by the "official" Salesian Family; "You'll just be a small local group in Paris!", "Five years on and you won't exist!"
3. Numbers did not grow, despite every effort. In 2009, "the national meeting" had ten members!

B. After reaping comes the harvest!

1. **From summer (June) 2009 until September 2009. A spark, and Confronto 2009.**

Confronto 2009: this time the French delegation had 11 young people! The experience was like a fire! The Rector Major, Fr Pascual's words resounded in their hearts: "The SYM is the soul of the Salesian Family! Light a Salesian fire in your hearts".

In a month the SYM in France changed completely: the weekend sessions increased 110%! Communications improved and 9 new leaders were elected to manage this growth!

Strong points in 2009

The SYM launched a new regional plan in the province in 2009. Word went out to the entire Salesian Family. The SYM was even invited to be part of the Advisory Council of Salesian Family.

Problems in 2009:

The brutal metamorphosis of the SYM demanded change, adapting how its Administrative Council functioned - it now had 15 members.

c. 2010-2011: The SYM leads the Belgian and French Delegation to the Madrid WYD

1. The SYM sees incredible growth despite all the ugly prophecies!
2. The SYM teaches us not to be fatalistic... never be afraid of dreaming! Dream big where young people are concerned! Some confreres discovered that young people feel the need to discover Don Bosco's pedagogy and spirituality!
3. At the same time in Rome, the new FRB SYM president was elected European SYM Coordinator for three years

Strengths over this time:

Openness to Europe pulls us forward. International meetings and contacts multiply.

Problems over this time:

Leaders and those in charge of the SYM are only available after 6 p.m., and Week-ends

Some religious don't understand why the SYM was chosen to organise the delegation for the Madrid WYD.

Some young SDB and FMA fail to find their true role amongst the young because they have the idea the SYM is invading their area of competence.

D. Since 2011: the SYM leads to renewal of Ministry in the Province
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The SYM accompanied and animated the Don Bosco relic when it came to Belgium and France. During Salesian celebrations young adults took part willingly and gave things a certain style.

1. In a society that everyone sees as secularised, the SYM witnesses to real spiritual expectations on the part of young people. This is unexpected and complex for many observers.
2. Young SDBs and FMAs are becoming more aware of this apostolic reality and the challenges they represent for the SYM members for their way of seeing the Salesian mission.
3. Traditionally the Provinces looked after teenagers rather than older youth like this. The SYM becomes a stage of renewal for many.

4. These new forms of animation and apostolic presence have meant that this year we have a novice and three pre-novices (a miracle for our Region!).
5. Thanks to the SYM our Province, whose average age is 73.8, is facing a less complex future.

Daniel FEDERSPIEL
Provincial