

# DON BOSCO

## EASTERN AFRICA

SALESIAN FAMILY BULLETIN  
4<sup>TH</sup> QUARTER, DECEMBER 2014

SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO PUBLICATION

# Don Bosco's Spirituality Today



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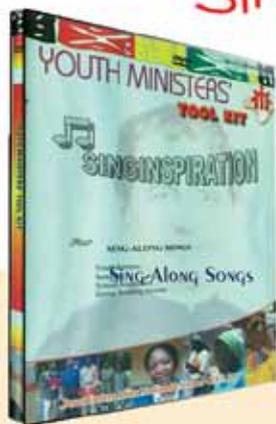
## THE SAINT



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**Merry Christmas  
&  
a Happy New Year**



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# From the EDITOR

Bicentenary celebration of the birth of Don Bosco is already taking place in our houses. We began this on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August 2014 with special events in our communities.

At the level of the congregation the Bicentenary was officially opened on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2014 at the cradle of our Salesian life and spirituality, Colle Don Bosco. Many things have already taken place. Conferring of the Missionary Cross in September in Turin and an International Historical Congress in November in Rome. In March 2015, an International Pedagogy Congress will take place at UPS, Rome and in May a meeting of all the Salesian Bishops, who are many, will take place in Turin. In August an International Congress on Mary Help of Christians and a congregational level SYM (Salesian Youth Movement) will take place in Turin and Colle Don Bosco and the grand finale of the Celebrations will be on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2015 at Colle Don Bosco. The Holy Shroud will be on display in Turin for 45 days between Easter and the end of the Bicentenary celebrations. Pope Francis has accepted the invitation of the Salesians to come to Turin for the celebrations.

In the province we have planned many meaningful events to celebrate the Bicentenary. Every house in the province together with the staff, youth and friends spent at the same time a moment of prayer on Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>. An album (CD), 9 songs of Don Bosco has already been released by Fr. Filiberto, the Counsellor for Social Communication, when the Social Communication Delegates of the Africa Region met at DBYES. T-Shirts with the logo of the Bicentenary is being distributed. With the help of the students of Theology a prayer book and radio programs on Don Bosco are to be produced. Two symposiums; one at Don Bosco Utume and the other at Don Bosco Moshi on the Salesian spirituality are to take place next year. In Kenya a grand youth meet is to be held with the theme "YOUTH TRANSFORMING THE WORLD" in which celebrities will be invited to perform. This will be an occasion to showcase Don Bosco and the Salesian activities, to give messages to the youth and to make Don Bosco known to the general public especially the youth. Don Bosco's fest is to be celebrated at our Marian shrine at Upper Hill in which every community is to show case their activities. The Provincial level conclusion of the centenary will be held at the Shrine and on this day first profession and final profession will be celebrated. A centenary book on the Province is to be published. And each community is to celebrate the centenary in their own particular way.

All these are many activities and surely they will make us more popular as it did during the pilgrimage of the relic. One question everyone connected with this great saint could ask is: all these activities are being done to celebrate the father and friend and youth at the congregational, provincial and institutional level but what am I doing to celebrate and to make myself more and more like Don Bosco?

The main theme of this issue of the bulletin is the spirituality of Don Bosco lived today. There are articles to explain this theme from various parts of the province. Also there is reflection on the recently concluded Synod on the family. Let's remember that family is the basis of all that we are and we become. Let this issue of Don Bosco Eastern Africa help us to invigorate the enthusiasm in celebrating the Bicentenary of Don Bosco as the members of his family.

As we approach the Feast of the Birth of Jesus, I wish all the readers of Don Bosco Eastern Africa, a Christmas filled with many blessings.

*Sebastian Koladiyil*

# The Message of the Rector Major

## To fly higher and go farther

*I believe that one of the greatest gifts we can give Don Bosco for his 200th birthday is the gift of a Salesian Family that's more missionary, more apostolic, more "outgoing," as Pope Francis reminds us.*

My dear friends in the Salesian Family, the greetings of the *Salesian Bulletin* this month come to us when we're already well into this jubilee year, this year of grace that is the bicentennial of Don Bosco's birth.

World Missionary Month has barely gone by. I've been repeating and have already shared with you many times that it would be really beautiful if in this bicentennial year of our beloved father Don Bosco, and in the following years, we were able to count on a strong animation of our youth ministry throughout the Congregation and the Salesian Family, an animation that would be translated into an abundant harvest of missionary fruit, in the form of the *missio ad gentes* of our whole apostolic family. This missionary character is very much "ours," an essential part of our charism.

At this moment the missionary commissioning celebration over which I had the grace and the joy of presiding in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco on September 28 is very alive in my memory and my heart. It was the 145th Missionary Expedition. I thought a lot about the first expedition, over which Don Bosco presided with emotion and determination, when he sent his first sons, captained by John Cagliero, into far-off Argentina, on that

not so very long ago November 11, 1875. Statistics tell us that 11,000 Salesians of Don Bosco and 3,500 Daughters of Mary Help of Christians have departed since then from the Basilica.

Rummaging through the baggage of my own experience, I can relate that during my service in the province of South Argentina in these recent years, particularly in dialog with the Salesian confreres of Patagonia, I could examine with greater attention and admiration the heroic pages of our missions and the extraordinary apostolic dimensions of those first sons of Don Bosco, as well as the daring of our sisters, those young Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, in the South American continent. And I could appreciate once again the human



quality, the apostolic courage, and the holiness of those first missionaries. In his biography of Cardinal Cagliero, Father Raul Entraigas has written, “It seemed that those men knew how to draw out of Don Bosco’s heart the secret of his holiness.”

In the celebration in the Basilica a month ago, I fixed my gaze and my heart on each of the Salesians, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and lay persons who was receiving the cross and being commissioned at Valdocco as a missionary, and I quickly reviewed every member of the Salesian Family throughout the world. That little group wasn’t meant to be a simple group of privileged people or persons selected in some exclusive manner; rather, was meant to be a pinch of yeast in the mass, a stimulus for everyone in the whole world because we’re always, wherever we may be, authentic evangelizers and missionaries of the young. I believe that one of the greatest gifts we can give Don Bosco for his 200th birthday is the gift of a Salesian Family that’s more missionary, more apostolic, more “outgoing,” as Pope Francis reminds us.

## **To reawaken the imagination for charity**

Therefore, in this missionary month of our jubilee year I invite every group of our family to take some time at the various levels of responsibility to carry out a sincere missionary self-evaluation that leads them to ask how they might be more missionary, better missionaries, according to the particulars of the group’s charismatic identity. My invitation is addressed also to every friend of Don Bosco, every youth who feels the inspiration and love of the Father of the young, every couple and every family who consider Don Bosco as their protector and model.

This means asking ourselves what goal Don Bosco is inviting us to aim for, personally, as a family, or as a group in this missionary jubilee year. I’m convinced that if we sincerely ask it of Don Bosco, especially in prayer, numberless initiatives and new Salesian missionary paths will open up little by little, right where it seemed that hope had been stifled. It’s enough to think of the wonderful example of the group of young people who in recent months in Sierra Leone, inspired by Don Bosco and Dominic Savio, have decided to roll up their sleeves and risk their lives to save the lives of so many of their brothers and sisters who are tragically beset by the Ebola virus.

In this we perceive an essential element of the missionary renewal of the Salesian Family: to know how to reawake in our youngsters the “imagination for charity,” as Saint John Paul II liked to say.

There, where we adults who are with Don Bosco can run the risk of “getting bogged down” in complex old structures that don’t always respond completely to the urgent needs of the poorest, most excluded, and most endangered people, the young, animated and inspired by the experience of adults, can find “new heavens and a new earth.”

So we mustn’t be afraid to give youths room to soar, to go farther, and thus with their whole Salesian Family to fly higher and go farther. They can be more missionary and more apostolic, as Don Bosco conceived the Family, dreamt it, and shaped it.

A warm embrace with much affection, invoking on all of you the intercession and blessing of Don Bosco.

***Angel Fernandez Artime***  
***Rector Major***

# A Musing on Spirituality of Don Bosco and its challenges today

He rolled in bed alone in the dark confines of his room, searching for meaning to his dreams. He dreamed because he cared. His concern for the sheep made him dream continuously. To dream is to live and to live is to dream sums up Don Bosco. He had all his energies geared towards youth. His spirit was overwhelmed by youth situations and their concerns. Nothing else mattered. I feel this should be the heritage that we want to celebrate during this bicentenary celebration of birth Don Bosco our father and founder.

We too would dream only if we care. Our dreams are our concerns. What are we caring about here and now? To me, three practices or principles that still make us worthy sons Don Bosco are: *'AWARENESS THAT GOD SEES US'*, *'OUR PHYSICAL PRESENCE WITH YOUNG'*, and *'A WORD IN THE EAR'*. These elements were the pillars of the spirituality of Don Bosco. Of course these principles are part of the Salesian Preventive System which is the hallmark of our educational system. The Preventive system besides restoring dignity, it also enhances relationship and the beauty of encountering God early in life.

I personally believe, 'presence of Salesians with the young' and 'word in the ear' are the two sure means of implementing Salesian spirituality. Both are inter-connected. They go hand in hand. We are present with them collectively and give 'word in the year' individually. That was the style of Don Bosco. Nobody knew what he whispered into the ear, except the one involved, and the whisper goes directly to the heart and soul. If you ask me to define in a few words the spirituality our founder Don Bosco, I would say, *it is his craving love for care and concern of the youth. Thus the youth became His 'burning bush'*. This is a real challenge for us who want to imitate the spirituality of Don Bosco.

Who is a good Salesian? 'A Jack of all trades and master of none' or those with masters and PhDs or a simple Salesian who is generous with his 'physical presence' among the youth and a 'word in the ear'? Whatever be our qualifications, to be Salesian after the heart of Don Bosco means, to give our valuable 'physical presence' and much needed 'word in the ear' to the young, without which we fall short, to live up to the dreams of our great founder Don Bosco. It is a spiritual challenge for us today

Don Bosco used to say, 'a grateful child is a happy child'. And I am convinced that only grateful children can grow into happy men and women who would make a positive difference in the world. Those who came in contact with Don Bosco became grateful children. Creating grateful youngsters is yet another challenge for us today.

Don Bosco instilled in us family spirit, and that is the hallmark of our community life. As we struggle and sacrifice ourselves for the youth let our thoughts and toil be, to instill catholic family values. If, half of our youth whom we serve become committed family men and women, our work is not in vain. And it is yet another daunting challenge for us Salesians today.

Youth are constantly on the run so we need to move fast to make meaning in their lives. They should be in our daily thoughts. It is when the young become part and parcel of our life, and then shall we roll in bed, dreaming like our founder, searching for meaning and thus know and understand how to live with the 'burning bush' today.

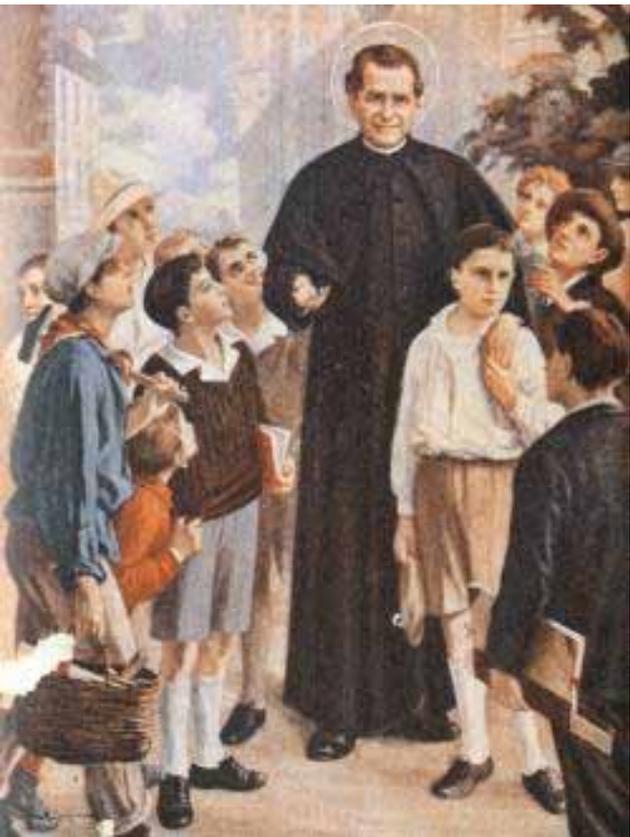
**Fr. Thomas Kunnumchira sdb**

# Don Bosco, Joy of My Youth

The school anthem of St. Joseph Vocational Training Centre, Kamuli has the beautiful words “Don Bosco, Joy of my youth” which is packed with meaning for life. It is also an honour to St. John Bosco who is a saint of joy and wanted young people to be happy “here in this life and in eternity” as he himself would tell his young people. The motivation and the original meaning of the author of this anthem is not known but surely it is an invitation to look into the life of St. John Bosco and learn to live in joy especially in the youthful years of life. It is also an invitation to look into our life of joy—where do we find joy and what makes us happy and joyful.

Majority of our trainees in our Vocational Training Centre come from difficult and vulnerable situations of family and society. As we sing these words at the beginning of the school I often wonder what goes on in the mind of our boys and girls. I console myself saying, ‘it is good to begin the day with the thought of joy.’ And Don Bosco becomes our model in finding joy amidst challenges of life.

All of us need lessons in joy. We all need models in life to follow. Models who lived joyful and exciting life, who found joy that is permanent and worth imitating. Teaching young people the right notion of joy and teaching them the right ways of finding true joy is indeed a pastoral ministry among the young. Making young people to live with joy is helping them to build a strong foundation for happy living for years to come.



Don Bosco’s name and character are synonymous with joy and cheerfulness. “God loves the cheerful giver”, is one of his cherished quote from the scripture. St. John Bosco was a cheerful lad right from his childhood. He understood well that happiness is an inside joy and made himself joyful, happy and cheerful all the time in spite of the hard condition economic and family condition he found himself.

From his early childhood his joy consisted in making other people happy. He learnt many skills and tactics to live happy life and his happy life made others happy. Little John’s happiness consisted in living a sound moral and spiritual life. When he was only seven or eight years old he had a great ability of keeping around him many children of his age or even children much older to him. He played with them, prayed with them, and taught them to live well. After playing exciting games filled with joy he would come home with bruises

and scratches in his hands and legs and his mother urged him to stop such games and avoid children who play violent games. But little John would entreat his mother, “Mother, please do not stop me from playing with them; because when they are with me they behave well and they do not do anything that is immoral that you yourself have taught me to avoid.”

Early in life Don Bosco realized that joy is the character of a person who is morally upright, emotionally balanced, generous with others and who is well motivated to serve God and others. He also knew that Joy is greater, deeper, and larger than happiness. Early in life his venerable mother taught him to be tough in meeting the challenges of growing up in trying moments. “Tough solutions are required for tough situations”, she would say. This reflects the humanism of Kahlil Gibran who said, “He who has not looked on sorrow will never see joy.”

God seems to have prepared little John Bosco through many trials and challenges so as to make him understand the hardships that many young people undergo. Due to economic hardships at home, especially after the death of his father little John Bosco struggled to go to school and realize his dream of becoming a priest. After becoming a priest he struggled hard to make his ends meet in establishing a home (Oratory) for boys.

Don Bosco’s words to his Salesians later in life “Let nothing upset you,” are lessons he learnt early in life. It is finding God beyond the struggles of life. It is like being like Job of the Old Testament finding joy and providence of God in pain and frustrations. For the virtuous man or woman, joy is more than just an emotion. Joy is a Spiritual tool that we can use to overcome our circumstances, to empower us to rise above the pain and the sorrows of this life.

Joy is something we choose; it is a decision to be fruitful and contented. Joy is the response to something bigger, something eternal and often comes from conquering oneself and willingly enduring suffering, insults, pain, humiliation, or hardships for a virtuous cause. True joy nourishes our soul even when our lives are often difficult and filled with hardship. Joy is a matter of our soul, it runs deep into the core of us and radiates throughout our being.

Don Bosco understood that joy is a divine virtue, but it cannot be separated from our earthly life. There is a deep correlation between our earthly life and heavenly life; living a joyful life will necessarily lead us to heaven, which is eternal joy or bliss. Joyful life is a fruit of virtuous living—a worthy living of Gospel values.

His recommendation to little Dominic Savio who wanted to be a saint, is to be happy and happy all the time. As the Spiritual Father Don Bosco advised him that he does not need to do extraordinary penance or mortifications to please the Lord, but the Lord is pleased with our joyful living. Joyful living consists in doing ordinary things in extraordinary ways. Dominic Savio, would become the youngest saint who understood well Don Bosco’s simple pedagogy for sanctity, “God loves the cheerful giver”. Don Bosco kept repeating to the boys of his oratory, “Play, jump, sing and dance, but do not sin” because sinning is being sad that ruins one’s joyful living. This is the synthesis of Don Bosco’s educative love, the Preventive System—preventing situations of sin and sadness.

*Fr. Lazar Arasu SDB*

# The new flavour of SDB spirituality

These days if you are in touch with Salesians, Salesian publications, programmes and anything Salesian, especially the bicentennial celebration preparations, you can feel the flavour, the touch, the feel of a special post chapter (GC27) aura. This flavour being characterized by a missionary under current, a papal Franciscan (of pope Francis) prioritization of the peripheral, marginalized, poor church and the rector major's (of Fr. Angel Fernandes Artime) accent on an actualized fraternity characterised



by spontaneity, intimacy and transparency in contrast to the utopian fraternity of formalism, of power, rules, words and pharisaic superficiality and show.

Spiritual renewal is aflame and has touched every Salesian in these past 6 months. We now have to keep up this newness and go beyond the flavour, feel and taste to make it a permanent culture of our identity. Our very fulfilment is in being a loving missionary like Jesus, specifically in the fields touched by pope Francis with a methodology of brotherly love that is familial and homely just as it was with Don Bosco, with Mama Margaret and the days of the oratory, drawing ourselves and our keep (the young) to the intimacy of Jesus & Mother Mary.

Our spirituality then has to be a 'walking seeing the invisible' as well as 'seeing the confreres' and 'seeing the young'. As the rector major puts it, our spirituality consists of a belonging more to God, more to the confreres and more to the young. Our spirituality today is in making this centrality of Jesus, confreres and the young come alive with a charismatic freshness, radically contextualized among the poor & marginalized at the periphery of society. To make it more practical and vibrant let us bring to life the saying of Abbot John Maine. He said: Find your Mantra, your Jesus prayer, if you want to step into the wonder land of spiritual experiences and feel the fragrance of holiness.

Find your Salesian mantra, let your young discover their mantras and let us walk together into the freshness and flavour of sanctity among the poor, among the poorest of the poor with right questions, possible answers and always synergy, with sunshine and a future. Yes we can be the generation with hope and love, becoming the 'Word', becoming Jesus, with a passion for the word of God.

Mary is our sure guide as she was to Don Bosco. The first dream of Don Bosco is our dream too as Salesians. Anyone who makes it his dream and lives up to its challenges will be the Don Bosco of today and tomorrow and in it will be the future of our congregation.

**Jim sdb.**  
**Maridi. Ross.**



## Synod on the Family Integrates Truth and Mercy

As Pope Francis officially opened the Extraordinary Synod on the family, he gave its participants just one rule: to speak honestly. The synod that was ‘celebrated’ from 5<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> October brought together 253 participants, including 25 women, from different parts of the globe. And it was indeed a moment of frank talk.

“Fraternal and open discussions help develop theological and pastoral thinking,” Pope Francis had said a month prior to the synod. What some sections of the media sensationally reported as disagreement among the synodal fathers was nothing but a profound expression of that collegial atmosphere currently prevailing in the Catholic Church.

### The Triple Agenda

Already in the build-up to the synod there were open debates among some Church leaders. Cardinal Walter Kasper was proposing an agenda of mercy. On the other end of the spectrum, there were some Cardinals who were focussed

on an agenda of truth – in the definition of marriage and family, and in Church’s approach to people in special situations such as homosexuality, and divorce and remarriage. This group was spearheaded by the American Cardinal Raymond Burke.

There were other Cardinals who sincerely sought the middle path. For instance, Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich appealed to his fellow leaders not to be carried away by particular issues, but to focus on general guidelines. As for the Pope himself, despite his conspicuous slant towards pastoral care, he came to the table with a collegiality-agenda.

In any case, what we have witnessed in the past synod is a revival of the days of the Second Vatican Council. Despite the struggles and “temptations” to hold extreme positions – as the Pope himself referred to, in the dynamics observed during the present synod, the Church has effectively integrated truth and mercy (John 1:17) in its teaching on, and the pastoral care of, the family.

## Married Couples at the Synod

The celebration of the synod itself had several other positive dimensions. One highlight was the presence of 13 married couples at the synodal assembly. They came from different continents and various walks of life. Most of them were involved in some form of ministry to families in the Church, notable among them were the representatives from the Focolare Movement - of Italian origin, and the Couples for Christ – originating in the Philippines. Both movements are now worldwide.

Almost every plenary session of the synod began with stories from the couples. They shared their commitment to the truth of the teaching of the Church regarding marriage and family, but also brought to the attention of the clerics at the synod the struggles that accompany the commitment. The couples also appealed for mercy and greater sensitivity as they presented the participants with some uncomfortable truths.

## Proposals Made by the Synod

Being a consultative body, it is customary that the synod only presents a list of propositions to the Pope to be included in the 'Post-synodal Exhortation to be issued by the Pope himself. In the case of the present extraordinary synod the definitive document is likely to be issued after the sequel that will take place next October.

The statement containing the summary of the synod has a look of a document that provides a solid framework for further discussion on the pastoral care of the family. The outline of the document follows an adapted rendering of the See-Judge-Act formula,

which, in the recent decades, has become more used in pastoral reflection in the Catholic Church. The method is also referred to as the Pastoral Cycle. In the present document, seeing or listening consisted in openly perceiving and understanding the prevailing situation regarding marriage and family life in the world today. The stage of making judgement was led by the Scripture and the Tradition of the Church. And finally, a way forward has been proposed in pastoral accompaniment of the faithful.

As a result, the '*relatio synodi*', as the document is referred to in Latin, does not attempt to change the fundamental truths about the definition of marriage and family. It was not expected to do so. On the other hand, it focuses on expressing a greater sense of care and empathy towards those in some form of difficulty in marriage. It further challenges young people to take their call to married life seriously, and the Church obliges itself in preparing the young people towards life-long commitment in marriage.

The closing speech of the Pope, for which he received a standing ovation, was sincere and serene, yet challenging. He appreciated the open atmosphere that prevailed in the synodal assembly, and encouraged continued dialogue. He also warned them of extreme positions. He said, "Now we still have one year to mature, with true spiritual discernment, the proposed ideas and to find concrete solutions to so many difficulties and innumerable challenges that families must confront."

A previous version of this article appeared on Sunday Nation (26 Oct 2014).

**Sahaya G. Selvam, sdb**

# SYNOD ON FAMILY: A Lesson for the Church in Uganda

“What is the most challenging pastoral problem in your local church?” An eminent pastoral theologian asked this question to a group of students of Pastoral Theology who came from different corners of the earth. I was part of the vibrant group. I retorted, “I am a missionary to the Church in Uganda, according to me the biggest problem facing the Christian faith in Uganda is cohabitation. It is linked to various other problems such as ‘loss of sacraments, weakened institution of marriage, disrespect to the local culture, and continuous falling church attendance.’”

As the discussion heated up I continued, “Other practical problems of cohabitation are child abandonment, domestic violence, unfaithfulness between spouses, bad example to children and young people and impossibility of getting religious and priestly vocations.” I also mentioned that in one way or another local Church’s hierarchy and pastoral agents at the grassroots havenot given enough guidance and pastoral support towards this vital aspect of Christian living.

Family has been a point of discussion and theological reflection in the past Church gatherings in and for Africa. In the late 80s the Eucharistic Congress that was held in Nairobi, Kenya was centred on the family theme, the first African Synod in the mid 90s discussed the Church as Family. Following the same trend often various regional and diocesan synods further discussed this familiar theme. Surely it shows that family life is not forgotten in the Church, but indeed it is the centre of Christian faith and the pastors of the Church are concerned with its many challenges. Everyone will agree that much documentation have been done, but it lacked implementation and practice.



Once again a synod is called by the Pontiff to discuss many pressing issues affecting the family life of the faithful. The theme/title of the synod explains it all: “The Pastoral Challenges on the Family in the Context of Evangelization.” It is a pastoral synod discussing the challenges that are faced by the Christians in living their ordinary life and of the pastors of the church who shepherd them. This synod reflects the spirit of Second Vatican Council that was held over 50 years ago. In the first article of the Pastoral Constitution of the Church (*Gaudium et Spes*) produced by the council stated, the church shares in the joys and sorrows of her flock. This synod is a concrete living of the council.

This synod is an effort to “Evangelize” the family. Evangelization is spreading the Word of God. Christ is God’s Living Word. It is in bringing Christ, his love and mercy to the family that evangelizing consists of. This synod also reflects the pastoral spirit that has been brought by our beloved Holy Father Pope Francis. Pastoral renewal has been one of the highest priorities of his pontificate. The Salesian cardinal Oscar Maradiaga, from Honduras, one of the eight Cardinal-advisors of the Holy Father says, ‘Pastoral Conversion’ is the top priority of the Holy Father during the Family Synod; the Fathers of the Synod and the Pope want to focus on how parishes and pastors form and nourish families.

The cardinal explained that this pastoral conversion means getting the pastor and parish leaders to realize that they “cannot continue doing the same thing they did 10 years ago,” and they must really respond to the laity’s desire that the parish be a vibrant place of community and of living faith.

It is needless to narrate all the pastoral challenges faced by the universal Church as well as the individual local churches all over the world. The synod mainly wants to face the challenges relating to the family life of people. Individual churches face problems in a particular way. For example, as stated at the beginning of this article the Church in Uganda needs to find a solution to the problem among numerous members of our Church living their conjugal life without the sacraments by engaging in a cohabiting relationship. The Church in other places is faced by the question of divorce and remarriage, communion to the remarried, homosexuality and the like.

The Archbishop of Kampala, His Grace Cyprian Kizito Lwanga in his address to the members of the synod said that poverty is one of the major obstacles in Africa and in Uganda for the stability of the family. The question Pastoral agents are faced with is how they should/can spiritually influence the decision of Christian/Catholic couples to build a home. Our actions should be influenced by our faith and commitment to God. The synod is not merely a gathering that tries to solve secondary issues such as communion for the divorced and remarried, rules for divorce, treatment of those differently oriented in sexuality and guidelines for the cohabiting couples, but it is concerned about the spirituality of family life and finding the best way to serve them pastorally.

In the words of Cardinal Maradiaga, the synod’s “main concern” is, in the first place, the sacramental validity of many Catholic marriages. It is more concerned about pastoral implementation rather than the doctrine itself. “The doctrine is not going to change, because the indissolubility of marriage comes from Jesus,” he said. “The word of God says what God has united men do not separate.” That is clear, of course; but the question is has God united only some couples? “In other words, is there a sacrament or not? This is the key,” he said.

As the flock face challenges of Christian living, the pastors of the flock to face challenges in meaningfully serving them. It is a question of reaching out to them with the love of Christ, the Good Shepherd. A major challenge is getting pastors and those working in the parishes to know their flocks and not see them as a number, but souls which need to be nourished and taken care of. It is also a question of updating the pastoral approaches of the priests and ministers of the church. It is building a living community where we truly meet Christ and be nourished by each others' faith.

The Cardinal continued, "This conversion in pastoral care 'is one of the biggest questions' the Church must face." Pastoral care of the family has to be re-examined. He pointed out that marriage preparation as a two- or three-weekend experience is attended by most who feel it is an obligation and little more, but this treats the Church as a "customs office" for sacraments. "The Church is not a customs office; we are not customs officials," he said. "We have to facilitate faith."

The synod was blessed with the participation of 12 married couples from different parts of the universal Church. They brought their "family spirit" to the synod. It is an unprecedented effort of the Church to listen to the flock. Their unique presence shows that the pastors of the Church value their presence and contribution in the Church and they too can guide the church in the course of its journey to the Lord in the modern times. It is a fact that the spirit of the Lord guiding us even to the choice of this title. We can be sure that as the family truly needs so many forms of pastoral assistance the Spirit will guide us to find the solutions.

Now what lesson or guidelines we can take from the spirit of the synod (as its conclusions have not yet been consolidated) for the church in Uganda as it faces problems such as cohabitation and polygamy: Church's hierarchy such as bishops make concerted effort in making pastoral guidelines, inculturate traditional marriage customs in line with accepted Church's canons, instruct the faithful in making priority in celebrating matrimony amidst financial challenges, be pastorally sensitive in accommodating the poor and disadvantaged in church's activities, put in place catechetical formation for young people in post-confirmation/*mugigi* period and above all cultivate family spirituality through liturgy, family prayer, pastoral visits, small Christian community activities and other parish programmes.

### **Let us make Pope Francis' prayer for synod our own:**

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in you we contemplate the splendor of true love; to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that our families too may be places of communion and prayer, authentic schools of the Gospel and small domestic Churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth, may families never again experience violence, rejection and division: may all who have been hurt or scandalized find ready comfort and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth, make us once more mindful of the sacredness and inviolability of the family, and its beauty in God's plan.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer. **Amen.**

**Fr. Lazar Arasu SDB**  
[\*\*arasuafrica@gmail.com\*\*](mailto:arasuafrica@gmail.com)

# Dates Set for Second Phase of Synod on Family



The second phase of the Synod on the Family will be held October 4-25, 2015, under theme “The vocation and mission of the family in the church and the modern world,” Vatican has announced.

The proclamation came as discussion at the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family got underway.

Following the announcement the mid-term report outlining the main questions highlighted over the past week of General Congregations was presented by General Rapporteur, Cardinal Peter Erdő.

The report shall now be examined by the bishops, fraternal delegates, auditors and experts in the ‘minor circles’ or small working groups.

In the mid-term report the Synod Fathers noted the need for further reflection on whether sacramental fullness doesn’t exclude the possibility of recognizing positive elements even in imperfect forms.

For example, whether there are positive elements in irregular marriages. The Synod Fathers make the point that when a civil marriage is stable, shows deep affection and care for children, then the Church should work to accompany it toward Sacramentality.

In the report the Synod Fathers state that the Church is particularly called to recognize suffering of abandoned spouses and how children are the real victims of family breakups.

Regarding divorced and divorced and civilly remarried Catholics, the report speaks of the need for “courageous pastoral choices” and “new pastoral paths”. The report calls for case-by-case discernment according to law of graduality, particularly regarding access to the Sacraments. Card. Erdő said dialogue on this topic will continue in local Churches over the coming year and responses will be brought to next year’s Synod.

The report noted that the question of cohabitation might indicate commitment-phobia, but also a choice that is taken “while waiting for a secure existence” such as a steady job and income.

**CISA**



## Union with God

Union with God means living one's life brilliantly in God and his presence. Thereby, one's body becomes a dwelling place of the most Holy Trinity; the sanctuary. The fullness of invisible God; God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit becomes visible in his life. The union with God in one's self is powerfully and precisely contributed by authentic and frequent reception of Jesus in Eucharist. And here the journey of Holiness begins officially with one's awareness. Holiness depends greatly on one's cooperation with Grace; the Sanctifying Grace. "Absence of cooperation with Grace of God is the absence of Holiness."

As engine cannot function without petroleum or any other oil necessary, so our spirits seeking for sanctity fails in absence of Eucharist. The Eucharist becomes the activator for Holiness in this sense, where the fullness of Trinitarian God finds dwelling place in our hearts and mostly the heart that is prepared for the banquet. This preparation takes me to the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Here we find God's mercy, love and forgives. Forgiveness is not found on earth but from above is rendered and imparted to the heart that is remorseful. And so the need for preparation and sincere confession is profoundly necessary here. For this reason it is recommended for frequent and authentic confession, as much as possible as Don Bosco would insist with his boys.

I think many have the same experience as I do that certainly the union with God and journey of Holiness is made difficult but not impossible by various obstacles, imperfection, spiritual defects, devil and desires of the flesh as found in the letter of st Paul to Galatians 5:18-25. All these make the spirit sluggish in moving towards to the Master who calls for perfection. St Francis de sales speaks about the sluggishness of the soul when attached to the above mention desires of the flesh. Here he gives three examples of three types of birds; ostrich, hen and eagle. Ostrich does not fly at all due to its heaviness. It represents those loaded and living in mortal sin. It becomes difficulty for them to 'FLY'towards their Creator. The hen flies once, shortly and with

difficulties, representing those living in attachment with venial sins and worldly material. Eagles flies always smoothly, freely and systematically representing those who are free from sin and worldly materials.

Devout Christians find a concealing place in our mother, Mary Help of Christians who always grants us her motherly protection. Looking at the history of the church, no saint has ever attained sanctity without motherly intervention of Mary. Mary plays an important role in our journey to holiness. She accompanied St John Bosco from his childhood up to the last breath of his life. Don Bosco could always say “Mary has done everything, it is the hand of Mary and much more, Mary will provide.” Don Bosco knew what it means to be devoted to our Mother. And so for Christians to deny the fact of active presence of Mary in the church and their lives alike, brings an idea to me about a child that has been abandoned and thrown in the bush by irresponsible mother. This applies to us when we tend to shut doors of our hearts for Mary not to enter. Why do we do so? The heart that has encountered our Mother, remains in good position of attaining union with God for she is always there to draw all souls to Jesus that are in need of salvation . And so she fully participate in the salvific plan of God for all people.

Don Bosco remains a vivid example for us all. In his century many would always wonder about a tendency of a priest going to streets, a priest with cassock playing with rugged boys. Many could also ask when Don Bosco prayed. But to Don Bosco everything was prayer. He was a priest open to the signs of time. As we celebrate the Bicentenary of Don Bosco, let everything that we do, be done for the great glory of God and salvation of souls and by doing so, Holiness will accompany us for the rest of our lives.

*Novice Titus Mwau*

## **Nun to release debut album featuring ‘Like a Virgin’**

Sister Cristina, the Italian nun who became world famous after winning the first edition of “The Voice” contest in Italy this year, is set to release her debut album, in which she sings Madonna’s classic “Like a Virgin”.

The album, to be released Nov 11, has been produced by Elvezio Fortunato and recorded in several studios in Los Angeles, while the videoclip of her first single, “Like a Virgin”, was premiered Monday on the Vevo musical website

Cristina Scuccia, 25, said her choice of “Like a Virgin” was intended as “a testimony of god’s capacity to turn all things into something new” and of the call she received for a new life, in remarks published by her recording company.

During her participation in “The Voice”, the Ursuline nun got 100 million visits on YouTube, where she appeared singing themes like Alicia Keys’s “No One”.

You can watch it on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roe8Uve7cJU>



# Freedom of letting go

My journey to religious life is one I think about everyday. It is really not the norm to become a religious in today's world. The time that I decided to join religious life one of my friend remarked **'YOU WANT TO LEAVE A JOB AND BECOME A PRIEST? YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR MIND.** This remark is one among many that were thrown to me when people found out that I was a Salesian Aspirant in Don Bosco Didia two years ago. For before I told them I'm having a long holiday before revealing the secret to them. I myself sometimes sit and wonder and ask myself 'why did I choose this life?'

Leaving all the pleasures of life in the world out there as a Loan officer in one of the Bank in Tanzania, I used to recall the quote from **Joan Chittister 'ONCE WE REALIZE THAT WE ARE SURROUNDED BY FRAGMENTS OF DIVINE, LIFE BECOME LUMINOUS'**. This is indeed what I feel when I'm surrounded by Salesian Priests, brother and my fellow Novices here and now in the Novitiate community in Morogoro. They bring much joy and light in my life that they let me see who I am and encourage me to share my gifts and talents with them and the young people in our neighborhood. They lit a light into my heart that made me see the needs of the world of today and taught me by example and actions to serve the youth of today with compassion and gentleness. They taught me to see God in each and every single individual.

For the rest of my life time I will surrender the remote control of my Life and time to Jesus through the Charism Of Don Bosco. I know well that from now on I will not have much control over the way I will spend my time, where I will be,



what I will do next etc. I will spend much of my time in my community, believe it or not this will be the most freeing year of my life. I'm glad to say my community helps me to stay committed and I continue to choose and grow in my religious life. HOPE this is a word which encompasses so much meaning for me **H-Heart, O-Opportunity, P-Perseverance and E-Energy**, is what hope means to me. I need all this to be on this journey. First of all my heart has to be in it fully and secondly this life brings forth opportunity of growth and new insights.

Since religious life is not a norm, many people see it odd to even think about becoming a priest. I choose to persevere despite what the majority of the world might think and speak about me. Since in some parts of the world the number of people joining the Consecrated life has declined some people consider that consecrated life is going through a serious crisis however for me as a young person intending to live a Salesian life I look more into the bright side of religious life where I see ever increasing number of young people willingly coming forward to offer their life to God and the world of the young people. I'm too busy enjoying the light. My heart is in what I do and I see opportunities in this ever-changing world. I persevere in being a good religious as I can be, so when it comes to the future of religious life, I'm not worried. I can't dwell on what the past used to be for me nor on what the future might be. I live the present as happy as I can be. If I dwell on the past and worry about the future, I will miss what is in front of me today. I have to admit, though, I'm a bit nervous about it all, this is entirely new to me in almost every way. No one likes change, especially when that change is as intense one as it is for me. It is part of the **letting go**. It is not just about possessions and autonomy, it also has a lot to do with **letting go** of expectation that may prevent me from being completely open to the Current experience. JESUS has the wheel now and he knows what he is doing he knows why he took me from there. So JESUS MY LORD lets go on the journey and I'm coming along for the ride.

*Novice Gregory Mpotwa*



# Fire! Fire! ....Burning bush in Novitiate



“Fire! Fire! There is the blaze of fire in the bush, but the bush is not consuming”. We were all filled with amazement mixed with fear, worried and frightened we turned and looked keenly, there in the burning bush of charming Muslims boys and girls, young and energetic. We heard a soft sound saying “Remove your shoes for the place you are standing is Holy ground.

That is how we entered novitiate and found home oratory and parish oratory in Kihonda Kilimanjaro Morogoro diocese. Young people welcomed us with open arms. It has been a very momentous encounter for us because God provided us the chance to evangelize to Muslims. How could a Muslim listen to a Christian? This reality was far away from most of us that is why we looked abet scared at first but as an adage goes “Don’t judge a book by its cover,” the young people are not only listening to us but also many admire our work including Muslims.

We now have three oratories. Home oratory, parish oratory and Christ the King oratory in one of the out station and is the new oratory. The oratory starts in the morning after mass up to 2:00pm for senior youth then from 2:00pm to 3:30pm we meet the junior. They are every gorgeous.

On Wednesdays we go to secondary schools where we teach catechesis to catholic students. This year we are in four secondary schools. We entered one secondary school for the first time this year. Kihonda secondary has many students but very disciplined. Three quarters of them are Catholics numbering around eight hundred students who are very eager to learn and assimilate catholic faith.

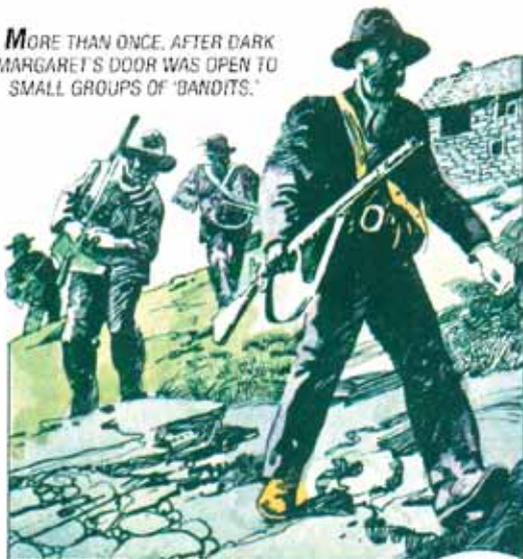
The experience I have in working with young people is challenging. The young people eagerly awaits to unlive with mystics in the spirit who can be connected to the Vne and bear abundant fruit. All members of salasian family young people and all people of good will let us be mystics. May God bless you abundantly.

*Novice Kevin Simiyu Wasike*



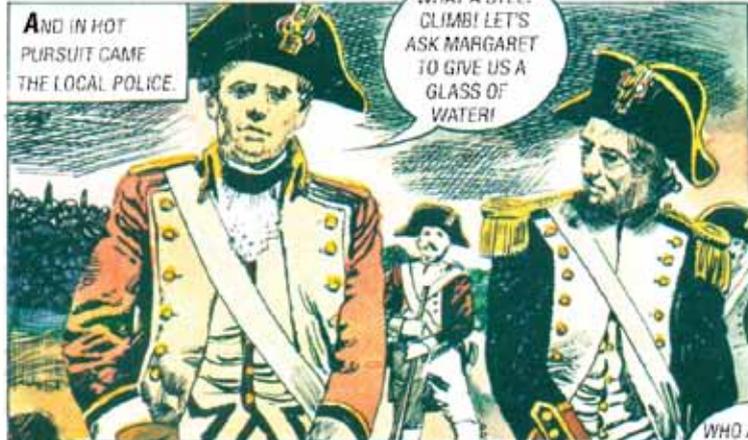
# A BOY WITH

MORE THAN ONCE, AFTER DARK MARGARET'S DOOR WAS OPEN TO SMALL GROUPS OF "BANDITS."



AND IN HOT PURSUIT CAME THE LOCAL POLICE.

WHAT A STEEP CLIMB! LET'S ASK MARGARET TO GIVE US A GLASS OF WATER!



IN THE MEANTIME ON THE HAYLOFT...

BUT JOHN COULD NOT UNDERSTAND...

WHO ARE THEY MOTHER? WHY ARE THE POLICE LOOKING FOR THEM?

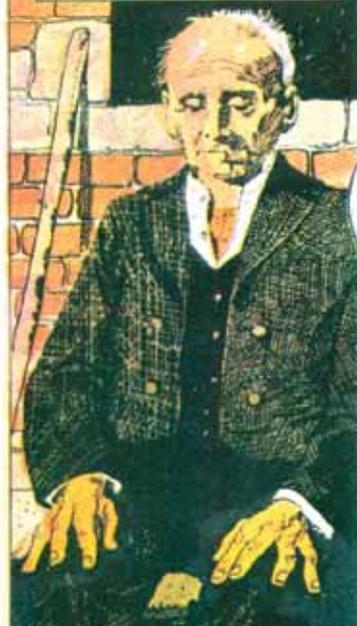


# A DREAM



IN ONE OF THE HOUSES OF BECCHI LIVED CECCO. ONCE UPON A TIME HE WAS VERY RICH BUT HE WASTED EVERYTHING AND NOW HE WAS TOO POOR AND ASHAMED TO BEG SO HE OFTEN WENT HUNGRY.

WHILE WE WORKED IN THE FIELDS AND AT HOME LIKE ANTS, HE WAS BUSY PARTYING.



WHEN IT GREW DARK...

JOHNNY PLEASE PUT THIS BOWL OF SOUP ON THE WINDOWSILL AND CLOSE THE WINDOW.



# Peace in the footsteps of Saint John Bosco

Tonj will never forget this wonderful day. It was 4pm when the Salesian Family of Don Bosco mission gathered in fraternal communion with the Salesian Province of Eastern Africa, to celebrate the bicentenary birthday of Don Bosco. One in prayer with the whole province, the community at Tonj remembered and celebrated Saint John Bosco. Early in the afternoon, the salesian family together with the youth and got ready to go to the Parish. Once at the parish, Father Karuiki and his team led and animated us with a relevant and meaningful prayer service honouring St. John Bosco.

People from all walks of life join in to learn and celebrate Don Bosco. The Salesians, aspirants, pre-novices, the daughters of Mary Help of Christians, members of the Salesian family, collaborators like the Kagamega sisters, the Youth and children from the Parish,

Pupils from Don Bosco Bongo Primary School and from Don Bosco Secondary School Tonj joined together to celebrate in prayer the gift of Don Bosco to the Church. Don Bosco smiles where he is.

Emotionally and prayerfully, our choir is animated the service. It was time to thank God for the gift of Saint John Bosco. Father Karuiki in his talk presents Don Bosco as a man of peace. He enthusiastically speaks about Don Bosco and peace. He skillfully links scripture, Salesianity and peace especially in South Sudan. Everybody follows him with delight.

One of the Youth, in order to quench his curiosity, asks: "Father, when are we going to gather again in this manner?" This young man is not alone to ask such question. We are looking forward to having another celebration.

*Domi*



# IYS students' RECOLLECTION DAY



On Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> August, all the students of IYS had a day of retreat (recollection).

Early in the morning, a great number of students were already at the Carmelites Convent ready to start a fascinating day.

Fr. Alex Mulongo, SDB, was the facilitator. The theme was “Mary’s Magnificat”. He compared the Magnificat with our own lives as we also have a mission to accomplish through the studies. As Mary, we stand at the service of humanity, we are agents of change and transformation. Education becomes a means to personal, community and society transformation. Like Mary, we become servants to our brothers and sisters, all those who need our service and help.

There was also time for personal prayer and reflection, for walking and for sharing with the others. Then we had lunch together as we were from different courses and classes.

This day of recollection, besides being a day of prayer, also gave the students an opportunity to meet and know the students of the evening programme held at the Holy Family Basilica, as well as the ones doing different courses (certificates, diplomas, BAs or MAs) in IYS.

The interaction part was also a very interesting part of the programme. It was a great opportunity to get in touch with the fellow students whom we usually do not have the opportunity to talk to as we all are carried by our respective courses and timetables.

The students were very grateful for the experience and they suggested to have a day like this more often!!!

We thank Fr. Matthew Puthumana, sdb the new IYS Director, and his team for providing this opportunity which is also very important as part of our learning.

***Sr. Mary Nginah, FMA  
and Sr. M<sup>a</sup> Pilar García  
Moreda, FMA***



# First Profession Amidst the Renewal Mass

15<sup>th</sup> August was a very special day in St. Joseph Novitiate - Mutuini, wherein the First Professions, Renewals and Final professions took place.

During the Morning Mass celebrated by Fr. Hubert Pinto sdb and concelebrated by Fr. Felice Moline sdb and Fr. David from Sudan, sixteen junior sisters renewed their vows after which Sr. Cecily Njue (from AFE), Sr. Yodith Belay and Sr. Viola Dakanja (from AES) made their first profession. The event is a prototype in AFE province. In attendance were the novices, sisters from AFE, representatives from AES and some members of Sr. Cecily's family.

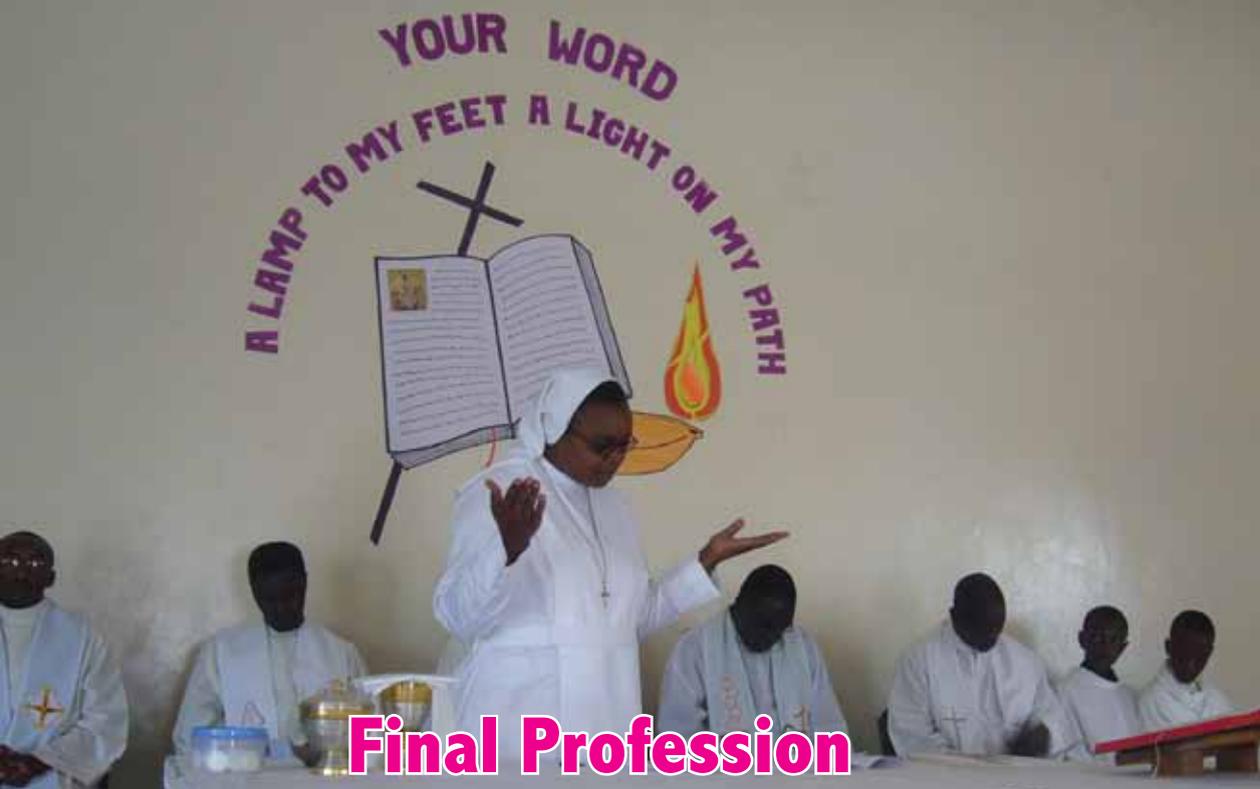
In his homily, Fr. Pinto highlighted five invitations of Mary during her life and how God does the same with us.

- **Invitation to recognize God's calling** (Attuning ourselves to God's calling)
- **Invitation to formation** (chance to dialogue with God)
- **Acceptance of the call** (Making a move after discovering the call of God)
- **Ministry** (Calling to serve)
- **Mary's song of praise "He is alive"** (Voice of the Lord accomplished in us)

He invited the newly professed sisters to be attentive to the voice of God who calls and gives the grace to the ones he calls. Novices and sisters took active part in the liturgy with their singing and dancing. After Mass, Sr. Chantal announced the obediences of the three newly professed Sisters although two were from AES.

*Sr. Jackie Kiura, fma*





## Final Profession

Shortly after the celebrations of Renewal/First Profession, there was another Mass in which Sr. Serah Njeri made her final profession. The main celebrant was Fr. Simon Asira sdb the Provincial Vicar for AFE, the concelebrants were Fr. Samuel Mwangi sdb, Fr. David Nduati sdb and Fr. Mbugua the parish priest of Dagoretti. Sr. Serah was received as a perpetual member of the institute by Sr. Chantal Mukase, the provincial, an event witnessed by two other sisters.

During this Mass, Fr. Simon explained to all present the meaning of the three vows as a concrete way of living the beatitudes proposed in the gospel.

In attendance were all sisters who had attended the morning Mass, others from other communities who arrived later, young people in formation, parishioners of Dagoretti, friends and relatives of Sr. Sarah.

Dagoretti choir, youth and PMC children were a great presence during the Eucharistic Celebration.

After the Mass, lunch was offered to all. There was also a time for entertainments presented to Sr. Serah and other sisters who had made their profession earlier in the day, after which gifts were offered to all.

After the celebrations, all in attendance left at leisure.

*Sr. Jackie Kiura, fma*



# A Camp to Remember – VIDES Camp August 2014

Once again the VIDES KENYA compelled by the Love of God invaded Mutuini with great enthusiasm. They came to serve and reach out to the many young people of this area giving them moral and spiritual formation. Driven by the theme, 'Drawing from the spiritual experience of Don Bosco, we walk in holiness,' the volunteers, FMA sisters and novices embarked on a two weeks camp to journey with the young people to holiness.

The Volunteers arrived on 16<sup>th</sup> august and immediately twinned up with the Sisters, novices and the local animators. To run this annually awaited event. They began with three days referred to as "Together days" basically meant to be for bonding and final touches for the camp. The camp was fully entrusted to

God and the guidance of our Lady help of Christians as Fr. Sebastian Koladiyil celebrated the camp Entrustment Mass. On 19<sup>th</sup> August, green grounds of Mutuini Educational Centre become a serene haven for more than 800 young people from age 5 to 19 years. They came daily at 8.30 am, received the formation lessons based on the camp theme, life skills sessions, art and craft and very educative games. The program ended at 4.45 pm daily.

One of the events witnessed during the camp was the camp reach out program to other disadvantaged children at Dagoretti Centre special children's home and school. This event was carried out by the Volunteers and the Sisters as it was on the weekend. Charity is at the core of every volunteering initiative



and they spent the weekend sharing shared love with children with special health condition and learnt more about children's rights, care and protection. It was a day set out to experience the gospel lifestyle of Jesus in daily lives as a way of making our society a better place for bringing up the little ones in the light of God's faith. The same team reached out to the Missionary children at Our lady Queen of apostles' Dagoretti parish church and spent their time guiding them and having fun with them. This act of charity was extended to the camp participants. All of them were involved in a reach out charity exercise to the neighbourhood. They brought a lot of food stuff and visited the sick, the aged and those who are in need within the Mutuini surroundings. They became evangelizers of the good News.

It was a touching experience as children did a lot of cleaning, fetching water and firewood, shaving the elderly and many other acts of kinds. Prayers preceded everything.

The camp progressed very well and days seemed to fly. On the closing day, the area chief Kange'the with three associates, four members from the parish council of Dagoretti honoured the event. They gave very encouraging words to the Children and youth. They registered their appreciation for the work done by the VIDES group in collaboration with the Sisters. On the other hand all the children and youth gave a true witness and a seal to what they had learnt by displaying creatively the theme. They had poems, songs, dances and act outs that left everyone amazed and touched.

Going out of the compound was difficult and everyone was happy seeing the success of the camp. The camp was officially closed with a Thanksgiving cum commissioning mass celebrated



by Rev. Fr. Minja SDB from Bosco Boys Kuwinda. eleven Volunteers were commissioned as it was their first camp experience while the others renewed their Volunteering commitment. Many thanks to Sister Teresa Fernandes and the entire Mutuini community whom we cherish and owe much of thanks for giving us the school compound to carry on with our camp 2014 program. The welcome accorded to all the Volunteers was unforgettable. Our heartfelt gratitude to Sr. Laurenzia, Sr. Juliet from Makuyu , Sr. Irene from Dagoretti community and Sr. Florence from Embu Community all FMAs for their continued material and spiritual support. Many thanks too to all the benefactors who made this camp special through generous donations. Without them we could not manage. Special thanks to all the Volunteers who physically participated in the camp and those who supported the camp from a distance. The VIDES Leaders who worked very closely in collaboration with the Sisters to see through the camp program. And to those who made unseen sacrifices and offered prayer for the same, we say a big THANK YOU!!! May VIDES Kenya continue growing day by day and may we touch many lives. Viva VIDES KENYA!!!!

***Bernard Ngigi***  
***VIDES Kenya Chairman***

# FMA Provincial Gratitude Day



On 2<sup>nd</sup> August, sisters representing all the FMA communities of AFE Province gathered in Laura Vicuna Community - Makuyu for the Provincial Gratitude Day.

The day began with Holy Mass presided over by Fr. Abel Njeru sdb the parish priest of Makuyu. In his homily, he expounded the theme of the day: **“Rejoice!”** with some of the reflections given in the encyclical of Pope Francis, **“The joy of the Gospel”**. He stressed on the importance of unity in community from where we are sent and the only place where we can fully express our joys and concerns of our mission.

During the Mass, the young people in formation and a number of sisters took part in liturgical dances and singing that made the liturgy livelier.

Soon after, there was lunch, followed by entertainment in which different groups/communities took part. During this moment, sisters presented their gifts to Sr. Chantal.

When all was done, Sr. Chantal gave a speech to the sisters appreciating each of them for their signs of love, prayer and

support. She gave to each one present a chocolate bar and a souvenir bearing the theme of the day. May God guide Sr. Chantal in this great and noble task.

*Sr. Jackie Kiura, fma*



# VIDES Kenya on the move



VIDES KENYA has been on the move since its humble beginning back in 2000. Numerous Kenyan young adults have given their time, talent, love and service freely to animate young people in various activities. This August it celebrated its 14<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as VIDES Kenya. Reflecting on those 14 years we can conclude that VIDES Kenya is truly God's initiative. He inspired those from the United Kingdom who brought and sowed the seed and those who continued to water and look after it here in Kenya. The leaders have been working hard with great commitment and dedication. They have been organizing one program after the other and every year the VIDES group reaches out to over 2000 children and youth in various activities of animation. The Volunteers themselves have been amazingly vibrant and enthusiastic. The Sisters have given this group maximum support and this has

seen its growth as these youngsters feel so happy and appreciated. Currently the active members number 120. They are organized in eight small local units but many activities constantly bring them together. These activities range from very active ones like the holiday formation camps and Easter and public holidays fun days to contemplative ones like the annual retreat and formation sessions. May God continue blessing this seed.

***Sr. Laurenzia Ndiwiga, FMA***



# Family: Transformative Parenting

As we come to the close of this meaningful year (2014) of the family, DBYES community thought it wise to have a symposium on family. Through this short article, we share with you part of the reflection we had during the symposium.

Since God's plan for marriage and the family touches men and women in the concreteness of their daily existence in specific social and cultural situations, the Church ought to apply herself to understanding the situations within which marriage and the family are lived today, in order to fulfill her task of serving.

Family is the basic fabric of the society. But what is meant by family. The word 'family' is from Latin word Familia. In the human context, the family is defined as 'a group of people affiliated by consanguinity, affinity, or co-residence.

In most societies it is the principle institution for the socialization of the children. The families and the extended families or kinship ties were the only kind of institution in the pre-colonial era or the so-called primitive societies. This means to talk of societal institution was to refer to families. The family carried out all the functions of the society such as political, educational, religious, economical, emotional and protective duties.

The historical situation in which the family lives therefore appears as interplay of light and darkness. This shows that history is not a fixed progression towards what is better, but rather an event of freedom, and even a struggle between freedoms that are in mutual conflict between two lovers: the love of God to the point of disregarding

## Causes of the family disintegration and problems

- Secularism materialism
- Eclipse of sense of faith in God and the human person e.g Godlessness



- Selfishness
- Lose of meaning of family and value of life
- In appropriate Media exposure

## Remedies

### 1. Family prayer

Educating the children to moral Values- it becomes necessary therefore on the part of all to recover an awareness of the primacy of moral values, which are the values of the human person as such. The great task that has to be faced today for the renewal of society is that of recapturing the ultimate meaning of life and its fundamental values.

Only an awareness of the primacy of these values enables man to use the immense possibilities given him by science in such a way as to bring about true advancement of the human person in his or her whole truth, in his or her freedom and dignity. Science is called to ally itself with wisdom.

### 2. Parent intervention to children exposure to media

Good examples and genuine witness by parents and leaders.

### 3. Proper understanding of freedom

The following words of the second Vatican Council can either be applied to the problems of the family: 'Our era needs such wisdom more than bygone ages if the discoveries made by man are to be further humanized. For the future of the world stands in peril unless wiser people are forthcoming.

The education of moral conscience, which makes every human being capable of judging and discerning the proper ways to achieve self-realization according to his or her original truth, thus becomes a pressing requirement that cannot be renounced. What becomes of the family today depends largely on the parents, environment, society, government and church. Everybody therefore, must work hard to save the family.

***Fr. Benn Agunga, DBYES- Nairobi, Kenya.***

## YOUTH EXPERIENCE AT DBYES

What friendly place to be very nice clean welcoming and above all cool environment to enjoy. Personally I liked it being there for only one week to me it seemed to be many years.

I was moved by the activities that took place before I resumed back to school. My gratitude goes to Salesians Fathers at DBYES, staffs, animators (tutors who we were easily coping with in all we did) and my colleagues, youths who helped me a lot in revision . Myself I also felt very comfortable especially when they came up with a smile situation that I was going through I was very happy and thankful for that.

Finally I want to confirm to you that the programme was great and we are longing to have it again come next holiday promising to inform other youths about what I learnt. May God bless you all again. Thanks a lot.

***MaryAnn Njeri –DBYES Youth (Komothai Girls)***



# The way to happiness

I never imagined that spending a day full of noise could lead to happiness. You just never know how weak you are each day when dawn presents yet another day full of noisy blessing. The experience of living Salesian Spirituality unravels this mystery every time i animate a group of young people seeking happiness. It is not easy for an educator to entertain noise but it takes steadfast love to appreciate such noises and find solace amongst hundreds of noisy children. This is a real test of patience that

for the blessing of a new day. To them, Vides volunteers are just friends whom they share and open up their hearts to without feeling nervous. For the two weeks Vides Kenya animated the young people in the camp, many concerns were raised especially about the moral lifestyle young people are exposed to and forced to live by circumstances of life. I felt challenged by these new ways of life and especially modern parenting that has much to borrow from the Holy family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

In my life as a volunteer formed in the Salesian way, I learnt that it is worth to put up with the noise of the children so that I can understand them better. This for sure is something that i deem paramount to share with all as it is what Don Bosco wants of me – to hear and recognize the voice of the sheep journeying together in holiness. When we give off ourselves in the service of the Lord, we simply choose the way to happiness which could be full of challenges but always promising and full of hope. This I have experienced in my own personal level both as a Vides volunteer and educator.

It felt so good and rewarding especially when I reflect on the words of St. Josemaria in his book the way no. 487, “don’t worry over the financial difficulties which threaten your apostolic undertaking. Have greater confidence in God, do all that your human means permit; and you will see how soon money ceases to be a difficulty!

I thank God for the gift of Don Bosco for through him Salesian Spirituality has become a means to happiness even in the midst of noise.

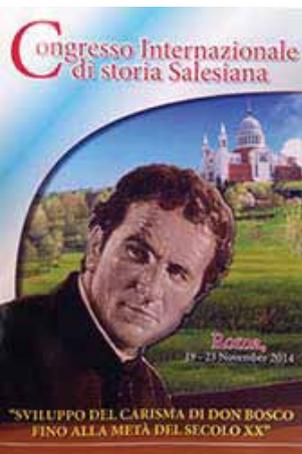
***Vides Kenya Chair***



our Great Father Don Bosco made it ordinary till this digital era.

As a Vides Kenya leader, you just don't know how to make fuss of volunteers every time a situation arises and you ought to listen even though your ears can hear reverberation of children shouting or chanting simple lyrics. This is the reality I personally experienced during our annual Vides Camp at Mutuini Education Centre in the month of August. I woke up every morning just glad to be alive and mingle with my fellow volunteers as well as animating the young people who frequented our camp sharing the love of God. It was such a great joy to cheer up everybody during the morning assembly praising God

# International Historical Congress for the Bicentenary



The International Historical Congress for the Bicentenary, one of the major events planned for this year, will be held at the Salesianum in Rome from 19 to 23 November. It will bring together representatives of all the Provinces of the Salesians and the Daughters of

Mary Help of Christians. The theme is “Development of the charism of Don Bosco up to the middle of the twentieth century.”

It is an event designed jointly by SDB and FMA from the outset. The coordinating group consists of Fr Francesco Cereda, Vicar of the Rector Major, Sister Piera Cavaglià, Secretary General of the FMA, Fr Aldo Girauda for the history of Salesian spirituality, Fr José Manuel Prellezo for the history of Salesian pedagogy, Fr Giorgio Rossi for the history of the Salesians and Fr Bruno Bordignon as secretary.

The final version of the programme of the Congress was published recently. There will be nine lectures in the course of the mornings and thirty-eight group sessions in the afternoons. There will also be the launch of three books: “Salesian Sources”, “Letters of Don Bosco”, and “Salesian Historiography - studies and documentation in the post-conciliar period”.

The programme is divided into three days of study on the history of Salesian work, pedagogy and spirituality.

There will be two half-days, one for the opening and another to conclude. In these sessions there will be some presentations on the current state of the charism of Don Bosco. Among those present will be the Rector Major, the Mother General of the FMA and representatives of the groups of the Salesian Family.

The Preparatory Committee agreed on the theme and title of the Congress after several meetings and much discussion. Sister Grace Loparco explains: “The question may arise: why celebrate the Bicentenary of the Birth of Don Bosco with an event that aims not to study his person directly, but the work that originated from him and continued after him? In fact, the biographical story of Don Bosco remains in the background, for several reasons. One is that much has been written about him and the context in which he lived. Another conference on the personal story of Don Bosco would be less useful as we look forward, as he loved to do, in terms of history and geography.”

She goes on to say: “With this theme we are fully in line with the Salesian historiography which, for at least the past fifteen years, has been studying Salesian work after the death of the founder. There is the story of a life that began on 16 August 1815 and ended on 31 January 1888. There is simultaneously the story of the origin of a charism that began with him and has spread to all continents.”

**ANS**

# Alberto Marvelli - Salesian Saint

## Oratorian at Rimini

Alberto Marvelli was born at Ferrari on 21st March 1918, the second of seven brothers. When he moved to Rimini with the family he began to attend the Salesian Oratory there. He was always available and became a catechist and leader: the Salesians' right arm. He loved to play all kinds of sport. He took St Dominic Savio and Pier Giorgio Frassati as his models. At 17 years of age he wrote down his project of life in his diary; it would renew his life.

## Catholic Action

He joined the Oratory group for Catholic Action soon becoming its parish president. He offered his service to the Church in Rimini as the diocesan vice president of CA. As an engineering student in Bologna, he took an active part in FUCI, remaining faithful to daily Mass.

## Work with FIAT, Turin

In June 1942 he graduated and began working with Fiat in Turin. He did his military service in Trieste, and succeeded in bringing many of his friends to Mass. During the Second World War he became an apostle amongst displaced persons and a real source of providence for the poor.

## Town clerk at Rimini

After the Allies arrived in Rimini he was appointed as an alderman in the Town Council in the department responsible for rebuilding, and the engineer in charge of civil engineering: "The poor are on our doorstep" he said; "the others can wait".

## Candidate for Christian Democrats

He agreed to run for the elections as a candidate for the Christian Democrats. He was recognised as a committed Christian by everyone, but was never divisive, so much so that one of his communist opponents said: "I don't mind if my Party loses, so long as Engineer Marvelli becomes Mayor".

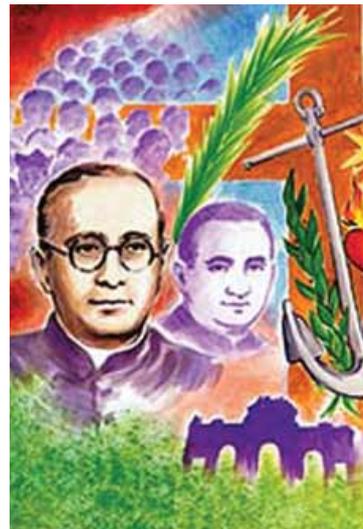
## Nurtured by the Eucharist

The Bishop appointed him president of Catholic graduates. His Marian and Eucharistic devotion really were the supporting columns in his life: "What a new world opens up to me contemplating Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament", he wrote in his diary. Each time I receive Holy Communion, each time Jesus in his divinity and humanity enters into me, in contact with my soul, it awakens holy ideas in me, a burning and consuming flame, but one that makes me so happy!".

## Good Christian and honest citizen

He died when he was hit by an army truck on 5th October 1946. He was, as Don Bosco wanted, a good Christian and upright citizen, committed to the Church and society with a Salesian heart. As a youth his motto was: We go forward or we die.

He was beatified on 5 September 2004, at Loreto, Italy, by Pope John Paul II.



ANS

# Working towards the SYM Don Bosco Meeting in 2015

From Monday to Wednesday, 6-8 October, a meeting took place at the Salesian Generalate of the international team that will decide on the content and methodology of SYM DON BOSCO 2015, the great international meeting of the Salesian Youth Movement which will be held in Turin and Colle Don Bosco from 10 to 16 August 2015. "I like the idea of this meeting, and the composition of the Commission, because it is international and inter-cultural. This is the spirit of the present age." So said the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, at the beginning of the first session.

The meeting involved 21 people, Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians involved in youth ministry from all the Regions of the Congregation. The common goal is to prepare the material for the morning reflections, liturgical celebrations and the vigil for 15 August 2015. The motto that guides and enlightens the work is the Strenna for 2015: "Like Don Bosco, with young people, for young people."

The work methodology provided, in the first place, a focus on the objectives to be achieved by following the path suggested by the Rector Major in his Strenna. The group reflected on two questions:

- What are the elements, the content and the procedures to be put in place to make SYM DON BOSCO 2015 a prayerful experience and a model of prayer for the Salesian Family?
- What contribution can the event make so that

it can have strong spiritual and charismatic results not only during those days in Valdocco and Colle, but also thereafter?

As a second step, working groups were set up with specific aims: music, liturgy, Don Bosco's charism, personal testimonies, and so on.

The General Councillor for Youth Ministry, Fr Fabio Attard, insisted on a number of criteria for the success of the group: working together; valuing our charismatic and spiritual heritage; keeping in mind the universality of the Salesian Family; thinking globally (languages, gestures, expressions, etc.); establishing effective systems of communication and sharing; making contact with others in various parts of the world.

**ANS**





## In Lebanon, a Major Catholic Village Walks Its Way of the Cross

At Border With Syria, Town of Kaa Has History of Terror, Discrimination

The village of Kaa is in the north of the Bekaa Valley, close to the Syrian border. It has a population of some 13,000 Christians, most of them Melkites. After the city of Zahle, this is the home of the country's the largest Catholic population. Kaa is surrounded by mostly Shiite Muslim communities.

Kaa has been very poor for a long time, with government services largely absent. On July 1, 1975, Islamic extremists from adjacent villages violently attacked the community. Five people were martyred. The government did nothing to intervene. In fact, army reports at the time did not even mention the incident.

After the arrival of Syrian troops in Lebanon in 1978, Kaa residents were divided into those supporting and opposing that presence. The government cracked down on local critics, especially

members of the Kataeb party. On June 28, 1978, Syrian intelligence forces arrested 15 young members. Their lifeless bodies were brought back the next morning.

That incident left deep scars. It created a climate of fear and many residents opted for moving to Beirut. At the same time, there was an aggressive push to sell local land to outsiders.

From 1978 until 2005—that is to say, during the time of Syria's *de facto* occupation of Lebanon—the Syrian army took charge of security in the village. That meant a climate of repression, as well as psychological and ideological terror that came to dominate the daily life of the local population.

Ever since that time, according to well-informed sources at the municipal level, there have continued to be illegal seizures of land, and a complete absence of legality governing the

allotment of housing. Inhabitants of the neighboring Sunni village of Eرسال set up shop in an agricultural zone dubbed “the Kaa projects.” They built houses there, as well as mosques and schools, without any permission or any kind of regulation. This development has made local Christians afraid of a demographic shift that would erase the Christian presence in the community.

With the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the area came into the spotlight again. Kaa became home to 25,000 Syrians, most of them Sunni, and sporadic fighting broke out between the Syrian army and the opposition—a further setback for the people of Kaa. A number of homes were damaged and fields burned down. Trade with Syria was greatly hampered. A still worse climate of insecurity and instability was created. Each arrival of strangers triggered fears of massacres such as the ones being committed in Syria. The future for local Christians has begun to look very dark.

Throughout the history of Lebanon, the village of Kaa only made the news during crises. And so it is today, with the spill-over from the warring factions in Syria, such as Al-Nusra and Hezbollah, continuing their battles across the border here in Lebanon. The Syrian conflict is raging all along from the Syrian hinterland to chain of mountains straddling the Lebanese-Syrian border to the east, from Eرسال to Kaa. The border is regularly bombed by the Syrian army, with shells and rockets striking Lebanese territory.

The Christians of Kaa are living in a state of permanent terror regarding their future—for a number of reasons:

The location of the village being

right beside the border; any fighting just across the border in Syria has ramifications in Kaa;

The people of Kaa are living in territory controlled by the Shiite Hezbollah, who in support of the Syrian regime use Lebanese border villages as staging grounds for rocket attacks aimed at rebel forces in Syria;

Then there is the massive Sunni presence in the region that is home to the “Kaa projects,” an area that has continued to grow considerably in the wake of the arrival of waves of Muslim Syrian refugees who threaten to displace the local Christians.

Bands of Islamic radicals belonging to factions like Al-Nusra freely move about in Eرسال, killing civilians and engaging the Lebanese army in fire fights. The people of Kaa are on constant alert in the face of the threat of terrorist organizations expanding their presence, a presence that can easily turn murderous for Christians. Just like the Christians that suffered such heinous acts at the hands of ISIS in Mosul, many residents of Kaa are driven to exile.

Under these sad and difficult circumstances and utterly lacking security, the Christians of Kaa have no choice but to arm themselves with their faith and hope—all the while waiting to see how the situation in Syria will develop. Although Kaa is in Lebanon, its fate is always tied to the conditions across the border. As such, the situation of the Christians of Kaa is as dramatic as any faced by other Christians in the Middle East.

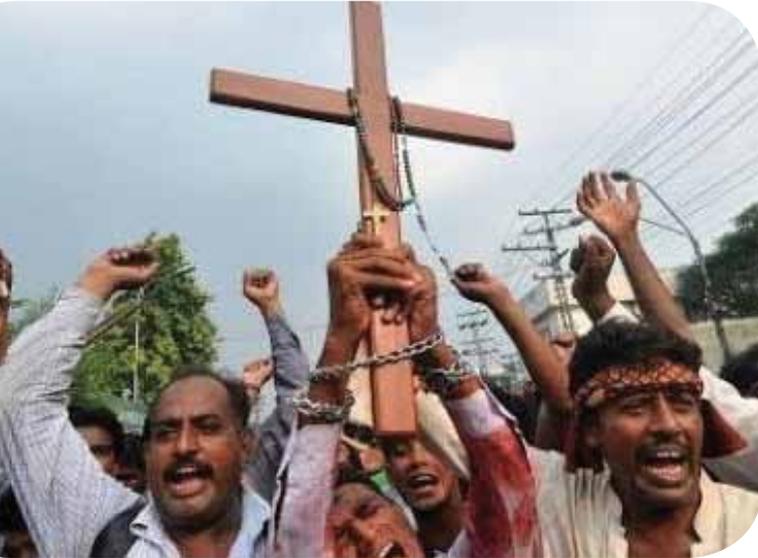
**ZENIT**

# Christians Struggle to Rebuild Their Lives in Syria

## Nun and Archbishop Tell Their Stories

Sister Maria of Nazareth has committed herself to an extraordinary mission. The Argentinian nun from the Institute of the Incarnate Word has been living in Aleppo, Syria, for the past two months, ministering to a traumatized Christian community in the former million-strong metropolis in the north of the country, which has suffered some of the worst violence of the three year civil war.

Previously based in the Gaza Strip, Sister Maria has seen her share of violence. “Our task in this country is very special. We are constantly confronted with people’s suffering. The war is having a profoundly deleterious effect on human dignity. People are losing their loved ones, their freedom and their rights due to the violence. On top of this there is poverty and a lack of the most basic things, such as electricity and water,” the young nun reports.



She lives in the compound of the Apostolic Vicariate of the Latin Rite in Aleppo, together with some fellow nuns. All of Syria’s Roman Catholics fall under the Vicariate.

Reports Sister Maria: “We work in a hostel for female students at the local university, which is operated by the Vicariate. We also take care of the sacristy and the liturgy in the cathedral. On top of that, we look after the faithful who visit the cathedral. Our main task is to listen to the people who are suffering, offer them words of hope, and help the best we can to meet their most basic needs.

“Certainly only the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ can bring about the miracle of sowing the seed of hope in these souls. But war is a terrible and cruel thing.”

Archbishop Jean Abdo Arbach of the **Melkite Diocese of Homs** knows this all too well. The Melkite spiritual leader is coping with huge damage in his diocese, whose history goes back to the 4th century. Dozens of churches, some dating back to the local Church’s very beginnings, have been damaged or destroyed.

“Last February, an armed gang broke into the Church of Our Lady of Yabroud, a 4th century church. They destroyed the fittings in the church, smashed the crucifix, threw the icons on the floor and tore the pages out of the Gospel. Then the gang burned the altar,” the archbishop recounts.

However, some churches were destroyed not by the rebels, but by the Syrian army,

such as the Church of St. George in nearby Nabek, which crumbled under an army bombardment in November 2013.

Not only the infrastructure of the diocese is in terrible shape—the people of the region, above all, have suffered the devastation.

“To date our archdiocese has counted 96 martyrs. The fate of 26 people is uncertain,” the archbishop notes. More than 1,800 families from his diocese have left their houses to seek safety elsewhere in Syria or have fled to Lebanon.

“From my visits to the houses of the families and from the reports by my priests, it is clear that everyone has been hurt by the tragic events. We have begun to support about 600 families with monthly assistance,” says the prelate, explaining that Syria’s high inflation rate is causing the local community great difficulty: “The prices are shooting up while wages are stagnating.”

Despite all the hardships, however, the archbishop affirms that there are no signs that people’s spiritual life is collapsing. On the contrary, he insists: “The crisis has triggered a major return to faith and prayer among those who have not left their villages. Though having to deal with fear and the constant threat of bombs, families are remaining loyal to their religious convictions.”

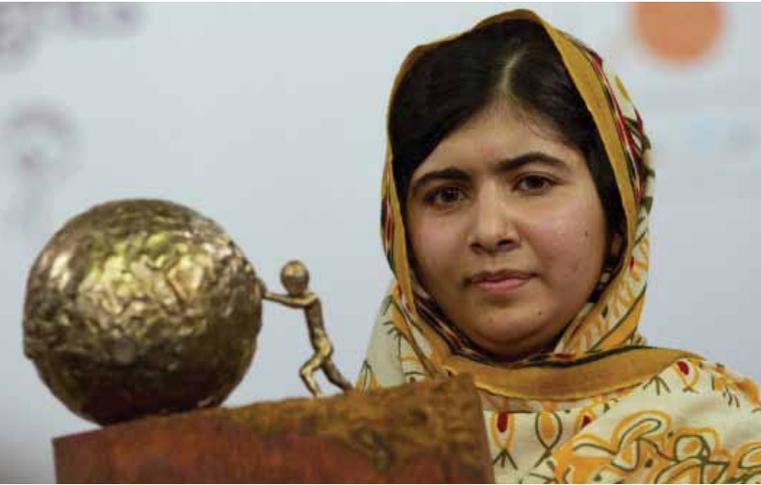
The local Church is doing what it can to continue its catechetical work to ensure that the faith is passed on to children and youth. “About 3,300 young people take part in our catechetical classes. Some 350 teachers are looking after them,” the archbishop reports.

Still, a number of Church facilities where those classes are held have been damaged in the fighting and Archbishop Aurbach relies on help from Catholic charities to find the means for repair and rebuilding initiatives. “Our Church needs help of all kinds: spiritual, material, medical and psychological. The Church in this part of Syria will be in real danger if we don’t react quickly,” he warns.

*ZENIT*



# Nobel Peace Prize goes to Pakistan's Malala and India's Satyarthi



committee said. “Through her heroic struggle she has become a leading spokesperson for girls’ rights to education.”

In response to hearing news of the award, Pakistan’s Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said that Malala was the ‘pride of Pakistan’.

It also said that the prize recognised work by Satyarthi to head various forms of protests and demonstrations, all peaceful,

focusing on the grave exploitation of children for financial gain.

“Children must go to school and not be financially exploited,” the committee said.

“In conflict-ridden areas in particular, the violation of children leads to the continuation of violence from generation to generation.”

The Nobel Peace Prize went Friday to 17-year-old Pakistani Malala Yousafzai and India’s Kailash Satyarthi for their work promoting children’s rights.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the prize saying that peaceful global development can only come about if children and the young are respected.

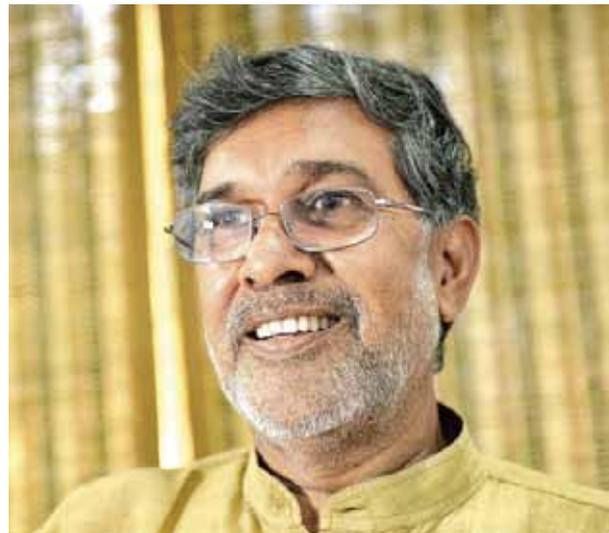
Malala is the youngest person to be awarded the globally prestigious annual prize.

“The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided that the Nobel Peace Prize for 2014 is to be awarded to Kailash Satyarthi and Malala Yousafzai for their struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education,” the jury said.

Malala Yousafzai who survived being shot in the head by the Taliban in 2012 was recognised for fighting for years for the right of girls to education, showing by example that children can contribute to improving their own situations.

“This she has done under the most dangerous circumstances,” the

***AFP***



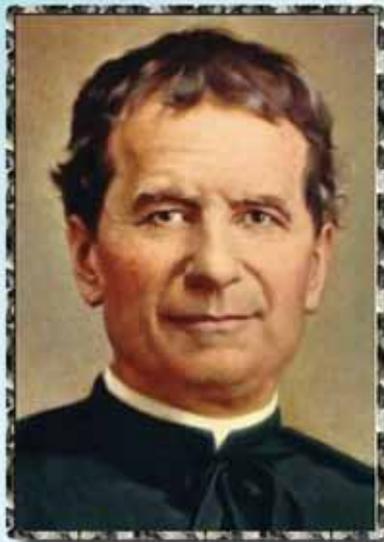
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Strenna 2015  
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# Like Don Bosco WITH the young FOR the young

