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# SALESIAN

**BULLETIN**  
PHILIPPINES



Reason as prophetic mission



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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

# Challenged to be prophets



St. John Bosco continues to be a modern-day prophet who evangelizes by educating and educates by evangelizing. His educational method, the Preventive System of education, has produced saints then, and continues to do so today.

This issue of the *Salesian Bulletin* focuses on reason as an expression of Don Bosco's prophetic mission. Called to be present-day prophets, we rejoice in the certainty that the Spirit will touch the minds and hearts of today's and tomorrow's generations if we remain faithful to the formula Don Bosco left us.

In preparation for the bicentenary of St. John Bosco who walked in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd, four issues of the *Salesian Bulletin* will help us reflect on Jesus preaching, curing, praying and ultimately dying and rising, and on the unique and radical manner in which Don Bosco followed in the footsteps of our Lord. Featuring the prophetic mission of St. John Bosco, this issue focuses on reason and Don Bosco evangelizing. In September we will study Don Bosco the educator and plumb the reality of loving kindness and its profound capacity to heal. In December we will reflect on Jesus praying, and walk with Don Bosco the priest and try to understand religion and its efficacy in the Preventive System. We will also contemplate our Lord dying and rising which is a daily experience for those who participate in Don Bosco's shepherding mission. Last but not the least, in March we will try to be on intimate terms with Don Bosco the saint and set out on the greatest adventure of our lives in order to encounter the mystery of spirituality as a sanctifying mission.

It is wonderful how members of the Salesian Family from entirely diverse settings share their experiences with the Preventive System. The *Familia Asociacion Damas Salesianas (FADS)* writes about reason, religion and loving kindness as key to turning negative situations into positive ones while the Secular Institute of the Don Bosco Volunteers expounds on contemplation and action.

Don Bosco's dream of the "Two Pillars" brings us back to the foundations of Salesian spirituality.

In a heart wrenching documentary video on the miraculous rebirth of the church in war-torn Cambodia we see through the eyes, heart and vision of a Cooperator's video entitled "A New Beginning," miracles of faith and hope.

The documentary video and the FMA media camp "Saksi ni Bro" which got young people all fired up to use media to witness to "Bro" are examples of what the Salesian media apostolate can accomplish in terms of self-expression for the youth and genuine prophetic ministry.

The Salesian Family is being challenged to be prophets today. It is imperative that she uses ways and means, the media included, that are attuned to the young. Let us be real prophets and help young people maximize their choices in favor of what is good, joyful and life-enhancing.

*Fr. Noel Osial, SDB*

## STUDY AND APPLY THE UPDATED PREVENTIVE SYSTEM DESIRED BY FR. EGIDIO VIGANÒ, SDB

# The Salesian imperative

We are approaching the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, which will be celebrated on August 16, 2015. It is a very special event for us, for all the Salesian Family and for the whole Salesian Movement, which requires an intense and profound process of preparation, so that it may prove fruitful for all of us, for the Church, for the young and for society.

The XXVI General Chapter, taking as its theme the motto of Don Bosco “*Da mihi animas, coetera tolle* (Give me souls, take away the rest)” and putting as the foundation of the five key issues in “Starting afresh from Don Bosco,” has set us on our way to the bicentenary. In the letter announcing the GC26 I wrote: “By making our own the motto ‘*Da mihi animas, coetera tolle*,’ we intend to take up Don Bosco’s spiritual and apostolic program resulting in his tireless work for the ‘glory of God and the salvation of souls.’ In this way we can find once again the origin of our charism, the purpose of our mission and the future of our Congregation” (AGC 394 p. 6).

### Second year of preparation:

#### Don Bosco’s Pedagogy (August 16, 2012-August 15, 2013)


Some years ago I spoke about the importance of a deeper study of Don Bosco’s pedagogy; now this needs to become a program to be put into practice in this second year of preparation for the celebration of the bicentenary. Then I wrote: “Nowadays a deeper understanding is needed of *Salesian pedagogy*. In other words we need to study and apply that updated preventive system desired by Fr. Egidio Viganò... developing its great implicit principles,



Fr. Pascual Chávez Villanueva, SDB, Rector Major

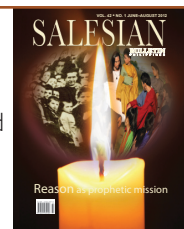
modernizing concepts, guidelines and interpretations so as to express the basic ideas in a modern manner: the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls; living faith, firm hope and pastoral charity; the good Christian and upright citizen; the threefold “cheerfulness, study and prayer”; the three “S” (in Italian): health, knowledge and holiness: piety, morality and culture; evangelization and civilization.

The same can be said of the great guidelines regarding attitudes: make yourself loved rather than feared; reason, religion, loving kindness; father, brother, friend; familiarity, especially in recreation; winning over the heart; the consecrated educator for the good of his pupils; freedom to run about, play and chatter (AGC 394 pp. 11-12).

May the Spirit of Christ help us to pursue our path of preparation for the bicentenary and may Mary Help of Christians support us; on the seriousness and the depth of the preparation depend in fact the spiritual, pastoral and vocational fruits which we are looking for from the bicentenary year. May Don Bosco, as always, be our model and our guide. (*Excerpts from the Letter of the Rector Major, Solemnity of the Feast of St. John Bosco, January 31, 2011*). 

### About the cover:

Visible in the warm glow of a Paschal candle on the right is an image of Jesus preaching among the people as children gather around him. On the left we can see part of an authentic picture of Don Bosco—the consecrated educator and modern-day prophet with his beloved youth. In the center is a bright luminous flame which symbolizes the light of reason and grace. It is the light of the Holy Spirit that illumines, instructs and heals.



# Reason as prophetic

By Fr. Noel Osial, SDB



# mission



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**“If the educator does not succeed in winning the youngster’s heart, he labors in vain. If a youngster does not open his heart to the educator, education fails” [Peter Braido, *Il sistema preventivo di Don Bosco*, p. 205].**

At baptism we are marked with oil as a sign that we are consecrated to God and anointed by the Holy Spirit. Our anointing is a sign that we are joined to Christ in his threefold mission as Prophet, Priest and King.

Jesus is the perfect Prophet. He is the eternal Word who lived, preached and explained God’s word to us. As the perfect high Priest, he offered the supreme sacrifice for our sins. As King of the universe, he will reign forever with a scepter of righteousness over the new heavens and new earth.

As Christians we imitate Christ in each of these roles. We have a “prophetic” role as we proclaim the gospel to the world and witness to God’s saving Word. When we speak truthfully about God to young people, we are fulfilling a “prophetic” function. The secret of Don Bosco, prophet and educator, is his love of God and love of neighbor. God has a passionate love for His people, and Don Bosco had a passionate love for God and for humanity.

Boldness and passion are important traits of a prophet. Prophets like Don Bosco make clear the presence of God so that people, especially the young are attracted to Christ with a passion. Prophets make excellent teachers. They have vision, great creativity, boldness and strength and they study and ask critical questions such as, “What does the Word mean to you and me?” and “Where are you and I going?”

Fr. Dave Buenaventura, SDB spends time with young people at St. John Bosco Parish, Makati City

## HOLINESS: THE KEY TO

**WISDOM** Don Bosco’s success can be traced to his deep “union with God”; a day-to-day collaboration with the action of God as he helped the poor boys in Turin. He admired St. Francis de Sales who showed how the Holy Spirit leads us from deep heartfelt prayer, no matter how brief and simple, into transforming action.

Senses are purified, the intellect refined, the will strengthened and vast horizons of holiness and apostolic effectiveness open up to those who collaborate with grace and live their baptismal promise heroically as Don Bosco did.

**“I THIRST”** The heart of every Salesian draws its inspiration from the pierced heart of Christ. Christ cried out in anguish from the cross: “I thirst!” Young people can lash out against parents, teachers and society and cry in their own pain: “I thirst!”

Only with the pierced heart of Christ can one give anguished and troubled youth Don Bosco’s unique intervention. Don Bosco echoed Christ responding in the spirit of *Da mihi animas, coetera tolle* (Give me souls, take away the rest).

Of the Preventive System, Don Bosco said, “The practice of this system is based on the words of St. Paul ... ‘Love is patient and kind. Love bears all things... hopes all things, endures all things...’ Hence only a Christian can apply the Preventive System with success. Reason and religion are the means an educator must constantly apply; he must teach them and himself practice them if he wishes to be obeyed and to attain his end.”

## THE WAY TO THEIR HEARTS

Father J.B. Lemoyne, SDB, Don Bosco's biographer writes: "Kindness was habitual with Don Bosco. This was the basis of his system, for he was firmly convinced that to educate young people one must find the way to their hearts [...]."

Don Bosco wanted Salesian houses big or small, oratory, hostel or school, to be like a home where all the people in it could live as a happy family. Educational practice reinforced the good and relationships were characterized by familiarity, spontaneity, trust and joy. He used simple words like "study," "devotion," "wisdom" and "work."

Don Bosco used the word *preventive* mainly to distinguish it from anything *repressive*. Fr. Arthur Lenti, SDB describes how Don Bosco's family spirit does away with the *institutional mentality*, the superior-inferior relationship and the official style ("*Don Bosco the Educator In Loco Parentis*" Fr. Arthur Lenti, SDB, *Salesian Bulletin*, Sacramento CA, 2007).

He analyzes Don Bosco's ideas about education on the level of philosophy, operation, strategy and the means or tools he used. On the level of philosophy, it was a synthesis of humanism and Christian faith. On the question of operation, Don Bosco used a family model and the principles of reason, religion and loving kindness. As a strategy, Don Bosco relied on *prevention* and the assistance of the Salesian educator.

Don Bosco's tools, or what one would consider "*educational reinforcements and formative instruments*" were work and study, religious practice, moral rigor and a great variety of play activities (games, sports, outings, theater, music, celebrations).

In his *Treatise on the Preventive System*, Don Bosco warned against authoritarian repression and abuse of authority which he believed destroyed the affective relationship and undermined the educational process.

Today people know about rights, but more than a hundred years ago Don Bosco already knew that abuse changes who you are. He knew that young people who were humiliated or cowed into submission suffered irreparable harm and loss of self-respect and that this weakened the capacity for decision-making. Abuse also led to aggression and resentment. This is why Don Bosco insisted so much on "reason."

Reason implies fair play and that educator and youngster are subject to rules and not to individual whims. Reason promises that everything is sensible and work assignments, discipline and religious practices are age-appropriate. Reason relies on dialogue which works to motivate young people so they can make an intellectual commitment to the educative process and participate in it wholeheartedly.

Salesians in the United Kingdom have a shortcut, a little acronym for the four relationship skills which a cyborage Good Shepherd needs to develop: respect, understanding, affection and humor. The first letter of each word spells out the Hebrew word "Ruah" which means spirit (Cf [www.salesians.org.uk](http://www.salesians.org.uk)).

**RESPECT.** The mystery of God at the heart of the young demands that a Salesian be polite, honest, genuine and sensitive in relating to the young. The dignity of the young person should be obvious in the behavior of every Salesian.

**UNDERSTANDING.** A Salesian works with the limitations and potential of young people as groups and as individuals. Knowing their fears and strengths, the Salesian shepherds them towards experiences that lead to life, preventing harm before it happens.

**AFFECTION.** Engaging young people with the heart; that is,

establishing genuine, friendly relationships with young people is essential to the Salesian work. Don Bosco said that affection sets up an electric current of confidence between adult and young person by which hearts are opened, hurts are healed and life unfolds for both the Salesian and the young person.

**HUMOR.** Don Bosco saw fun and laughter as an expression of faith in the God of life. In touching what is deepest in the young he preferred noise, laughter and chaos to heavy and solemn silences. Cheerfulness in adults and young people is a sign of holiness for Salesians.

## THE FUTURE: CHURCH AND SCHOOL AS FAMILY

The Church's moral program can be attractive to the kids of tomorrow. Education based on ethical and religious practices is the answer to the deepest yearnings of the young and to their "thirst."

For some young people, Don Bosco may offer the only genuine experience of a family that they will ever know, and their only experience of a church that is a happy family.

The Preventive System is really the most exciting gift the Salesian Family can offer young people and the cause of education around the world. More than prevention, it is a spirituality of friendship and personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, known and visited through prayer, the Eucharist, the Word.

Youthful holiness is a force. Happy young people, as a living sign of communion for all the world to see, will be the "compelling force" that can bring the children and future generations to Christ. ☒

## DON BOSCO'S DREAM OF THE TWO PILLARS

# Jesus in the Eucharist and devotion to Mary Help of Christians

By Sr. Maria Socorro Bacani, FMA

**THE PROPHETIC DREAM** At the good night talk of May 30, 1862, Don Bosco narrated the dream “for your spiritual benefit,” as he himself recalled to his listeners.

The scenario was a battle at sea. A stately ship was assailed by heavily armed vessels with cannons, bombs and firearms of all sorts. Even the winds and the waves were favorable to the enemy. All of a sudden, in the midst of the endless sea arose two solid columns soaring to the sky, but a short distance apart from each other. The first pillar was surmounted by the majestic statue of the Immaculate Virgin with her title inscribed “Mary, Help of Christians,” while the far loftier and sturdier one bore the Eucharistic Host with an inscription “Salvation of believers.”

The commander of the stately vessel was the Pope who, together with the captains of the auxiliary ships, strategized defense against the attackers. As the storm raged against the enormous flagship, the Pope mustered all his strength to steer the ship between the two pillars and hook

the anchor on both to gain stability and assure safety. As soon as he succeeded, the enemies bombarded the flagship with books and pamphlets, bombs, firearms and cannons. The battle became more furious, but the flagship remained undaunted and unscathed, and sailed smoothly on its course. At times it was hit by unavoidable splinters which tore gaping holes into its hull, but immediately a mighty wind from the two pillars would seal the gash and restore the flagship and put it back in good shape.

The next target was the commander-in-chief, the Pope, who got seriously wounded and died. But no sooner is the Pope dead than another takes his place as leader of the flagship. The self-assurance of the enemy wanes and fades.

Breaking down all resistance, the



new Pope steers the ship to sure safety between the two pillars. The enemy ships panic and disperse, colliding and

scuttling among themselves as they end in final defeat.

## THE MEANING OF THE DREAM

“And so,” Don Bosco asked Fr. Michael Rua, “what do you make of this dream?” Fr. Rua answered, “I think the flagship symbolizes the Church commanded by the Pope. The ships represent mankind; the sea is an image of the world. The auxiliary ships are those who are loyal to the Church; the attackers are her enemies. The two columns symbolize the devotion to Mary and the Blessed Sacrament.”

At this point, Don Bosco himself added, that “the enemy ships symbolize persecutions. Very grave trials await the Church. What we suffered so far is almost nothing compared to what is going to happen. Only two things can save us in such a grave hour: devotion to Mary and frequent Communion. Let’s do our very best to use these two means and have others use them everywhere. Good night.”

## THE FIRST PILLAR: JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST

Towards the end of his life, Don Bosco synthesized his whole pedagogical insight as “Kindness at all times and make sure that the chapel is always left open” (BM XVI, 168). Frequent and spontaneous visits to the Blessed Sacrament became one of Don Bosco’s spiritual legacies to his sons and daughters. He declared in a good night talk in 1865, “There is nothing the devil fears more than these two practices: Holy Communion well made, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Do you want the Lord to grant you many graces? Visit him often. Do you want very few graces? Visit him rarely. Do you want the devil to assail you? Visit Jesus rarely. Do you want the devil to run away from you? Visit Jesus often. Do you want to give the devil a good hiding? Frequently take refuge at the feet of Jesus. Do you want to be beaten? Leave off your visits” (BMVII, 32).

Again, Don Bosco emphasized the importance of meeting the Eucharistic Jesus in relation to the reality of death: “If we really want our meeting at the hour of death to be that of a friend, let us go to find him frequently and fervently in the Blessed Sacrament, and keep him close to our heart; let us pay him a visit at those times when we are free; let us offer him our heart, our will; let us tell him to do with us whatever he thinks best”

(BM XI, 492).

Don Bosco wanted the young to draw from Jesus’ Eucharistic presence in the Tabernacle “a treasure much greater than you would find in heaven or on earth. Whatever you ask for, provided it is not harmful to you, will be given you. So go and ask and you will receive. Knock and the door will be opened. Christ wants to give you his graces, especially those for your soul’s welfare” (BM VI, 171).

PHOTO CREDIT: COMMISSION ON SOCIAL COMMUNICATION-FIN



## THE SECOND PILLAR: DEVOTION TO MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

From Mama Margaret, little John Bosco learned to say the Angelus and pray the Rosary. She advised him to choose as his friends those devoted to the Madonna (Italian title for Mary as “My Lady”). From 1841-1858, he spread the devotion to Mary Immaculate in the historical context of the promulgation of the dogma of

the Immaculate Conception and the apparition at Lourdes. From 1858-1868, his devotion took shape in the Marian titles of Immaculate and Help of Christians.

When the basilica in Turin was completed in 1868, he separated the two titles. A few years before, in 1862, a miraculous image of Mary Help of Christians had been venerated in Spoleto. This coincided with the period of crisis in the Papal

States. The Church appeared to be crushed and was desperately seeking miraculous assistance. Don Bosco felt the title opportune and appealing. Furthermore, Pope Pius IX expressed to Don Bosco of his preference for this Marian title. From 1863 onwards, Don Bosco would turn to the Help of Christians as Mother and Queen of Christians and of the Church. In fact this is how she is portrayed in the painting at the main altar of the basilica in Turin built by Don Bosco: “Mary most holy stands in a sea of light and majesty; enthroned on banks of clouds and crowned with stars which proclaim her as Queen of heaven and earth. A band of angels, encircling her, do homage to her as their Queen. In her right hand she holds a scepter, the symbol of her power...”

As in the Dream of the Two Pillars, Mary Help of Christians defended and protected the Church. Don Bosco wrote: “The Church attributes to Mary the defeat of heresies. The Help of Christians was the Queen of the Battles in Lepanto in 1571, of Vienna in 1683, and she saved Pope Pius VII from the prison of Fontainebleau in 1814. She was and still remains the protector of the armies which fight for the faith. To Don Bosco it seemed that Mary Help of Christians was needed more than ever in his day because the Catholic Church was being assaulted” (Don Bosco, Preface, The Marvels of the Mother of God).

The daily miracle of growing in sanctity is yet to unfold for those who anchor themselves to the two pillars of Salesian Sanctity. From Don Bosco’s words: “Entrust everything to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary Help of Christians, and you will see what miracles are.”

PHOTO FROM TURINBACKTODOD WEBSITE (WWW.TURINBACKTODOD.COM)



Left to right photos: Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales, DD, Archbishop of Manila; Statue of Mary Help of Christians at St. John Bosco Parish, Makati City; Pope Benedict XVI

## SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS AND DON BOSCO'S MISSION

# A new beginning

By Imelda Benitez

**SHARING GOD'S LOVE** In the ordinary circumstances of daily life, Salesian Cooperators respond to God's call from moment to moment. Whether in the home or in the workplace, whether we are with family or with strangers, whether we are at church or in a place of recreation, we must always be a loving Salesian presence ready to share God's love as lay persons at any given moment.

Day to day, from task to task, we connect and reconnect with Jesus, the Good Shepherd who is the real owner of everything we are and everything we do.

Working as a movie reviewer for the Catholic Initiative for Enlightened Movie Appreciation (CINEMA), a project of the Office of Women of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines to promote media literacy from the Catholic perspective, I began to understand that Don Bosco did not introduce social communications into the mission. Rather, Don Bosco was convinced that his mission had already included social communications.

Whether we are professional media practitioners or simple parents, teachers or animators,

communication is crucial and Don Bosco is our best teacher as an evangelizer, educator and communicator!

I began to see social communications as a great opportunity to encounter, document and communicate God's love. It was this conviction that inspired me in 2003 to join a production team that was going to do a video documentary about the Catholic Church in Cambodia, a predominantly Buddhist country.

The video documentary entitled "A New Beginning" is about the rebirth of the Catholic Church in Cambodia after an era marked by civil war and genocide that claimed two million lives in the mid 70's.

As a scriptwriter, I went around the country to do both research and actual filming. I realized that doing so was like opening the "sleeping" wounds of the people in Cambodia and that I needed a lot of sensitivity in dealing with them in order to achieve my objectives. I had to call on the Holy Spirit to open my heart and enlighten me before doing anything.

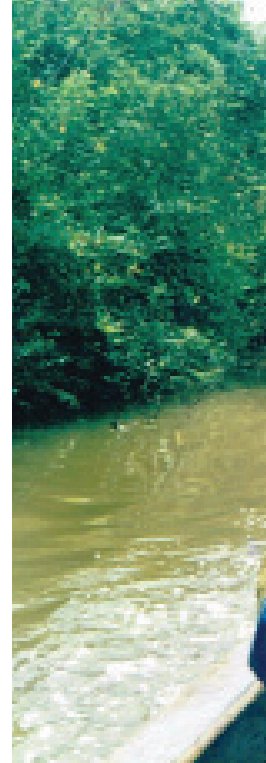
It was not easy. It was a monthlong heartbreaking ordeal just to be in a place where significant

damage had been done and horrible crimes against humanity had been committed. I visited the places where their loved ones had been imprisoned, died and been buried. I met the crippled victims of landmines, many of whom were children.

### THE GIFT BEHIND THE PAIN

Mysteriously behind the anguish and pain, I began to sense that the information I was gathering was actually more grace than data. All these stories, I realized, had actually been inspired and sent to me by the Holy Spirit. They were the same words of faith that people held on to during their most difficult times. The Word they believed in had literally kept them alive and helped them survive. It was just my job to document and to put on record this miraculous gift of faith, their life journey and the wisdom they had accumulated so that others might share in these precious gifts.

I was deeply inspired by the foreign missionaries I worked with during the production of the video; I still vividly recall one particular conversation. I had asked Fr. Hernan Pililla, SDB about his missionary work in Cambodia and he replied: "I





Left, The production team on a boat ride to a filming site; Top right, the author with the famous Angkor Wat Temple in the background; Lower right, the Catholics who kept their faith and survived the civil war.

am not here to convert people but to love them the way Jesus loves me." I will always keep his very short yet so meaningful response in my heart.

Indeed this is the missionary spirit that everyone is called to have. This is LOVE. I realize that truly Jesus' love is the positive force that makes possible new life and new beginnings. With the ebb and flow of life, Jesus' love can seem like a wave to most people. Thus like surfers, our task is to ride the wave as gracefully as we can, and go where the Lord brings us. I believe the Lord brought me to Cambodia to encounter him more closely through the people and events that transpired there.

Undeniably, it involves a great deal of faith and strength to let go and submit to God's will. Sometimes we must help others ride the waves which will carry them to new horizons of peace and joy undreamed of before.

Unlike other ordinary productions, the one I did for the Catholic Church in Cambodia was more like a spiritual exercise than a mere creative representation of Cambodia's struggle for religious freedom. It was an experience of pure contemplation in action that

demanding of me, from moment to moment, constant prayer, reflection, sacrifice and always, discernment.

Just like my companions, I embraced every difficulty courageously. Mobility, to name a few, was extremely hard. There were times when our boat was threatened and tossed by the heavy rains and strong winds along the Mekong river. On other occasions, we had to sleep beside pigpens just so we could meet and interview people. We also had to travel along extremely rough and bumpy roads, and not to mention the trying moments of reaching out to disinterested people who would unwillingly cooperate.

But amidst all the hardships were numerous graces. God continued to send us gifts: great people and meaningful experiences that made us better persons and brought out the best in us.

We were overwhelmed by God's blessings. Moreover, the completed video that I had originally written in English has now been translated into five languages—Khmer (Cambodia), Spanish, French, Thai and Italian. In fact, it has been widely used as information material in the promotion

of the Church in Cambodia.

As Salesian Cooperators, we are called to discern and respond to the action of the Holy Spirit. When I documented Cambodia's new journey of faith, it was a new beginning for me. I began to share in the great depths of the Cambodian's faith journey.

God makes waves; we must be ready to ride them and let the Holy Spirit lead us where He wills. This is the work model of our founder, St. John Bosco, who continuously makes waves of love and brings God's love to everybody, reaching out to young people to carry them to Jesus.

During the 7th East Asia Regional Congress in Bangkok, Thailand on October 11-15, 2011 Cambodia became the youngest province of Salesian Cooperators in the region along with Indonesia. It was a great formation moment and a time for praise. It was a new beginning! 🙌

**Editor's Note:** "A New Beginning" has been awarded Honorable Mention at the International Catholic Film Festival held in Warzawa Poland in June 2004 under the Documentary category for documenting the rebirth of Catholic Church in Cambodia. The video was produced by the regional office of Signis Asia, an International Association of Catholic Communicators. It is available on Youtube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-Yh9RPJHlo>.

# Like sheep without a shepherd

By Fr. John Cabrido, SDB

I must have walked over 100 kilometers through thick tropical rainforest spread over four discontinuous days before I reached Tuke, a tiny Catholic mission station established by German MSC Fathers nearly 50 years ago deep in the Pomio mountains. The 11 hamlets which comprise the Catholic community belong to the archdiocese of Rabaul, led by Salesian Archbishop Francesco Panfilo, SDB.

The trek to Tuke may be arduous, but the final two-hour leg is infinitely more so! I finally gave up counting the times I fell—frontward, backwards, sideward—as my six youthful helpers and I slithered down the steep, mountain descent. On one instance, for about 150 meters, I clung to slippery mountain walls and held tightly on to tree vines and roots for dear life to avoid plunging into a deep ravine.

Tuke's remoteness and inaccessibility may be a reason for the infrequent visits of its diocesan pastor. When I first arrived at the station in late February 2012 and celebrated the Eucharist, it was the

first mass the people had since May the year before. It was a difficult mass. The people knew neither the responses nor the songs; they were even mistaken in the postures during the celebration, opting to sit down during consecration! It quickly dawned on me I was in the midst of a nominally Catholic community that had managed to hold steadfastly to its faith, while not deepening in it.

Another root of Tuke's troubles is the lack of education. Though most people in the community were illiterate, the elementary school opened only in 2008. Once, having mistaken a young adult as one of the teachers, I was corrected amidst thunderous laughter and told that the over 30-year old was actually a Grade 5 student! Not knowing when I would be returning to Tuke again, I celebrated baptism for seven infants during my first, brief five-day Lenten stay and sat down every evening for confession during the time for rosary. I took the occasion of the "good night talk" to do a little catechesis—but just how much can one achieve in four nights?



Tuke too had its delights, primary of which was the nearby, immense river which soothed my sore legs and provided the villagers with an amusing spectacle whenever I took my afternoon bath. Without electricity, I also had the joy of sleeping at 7:00 at night to the chorus of crickets under a cool, starry sky.

Leaving the village for the first time was particularly difficult as I wondered when the Eucharist would be available again for the villagers. The gospel description "sheep without a shepherd" has never been as real for me as it was then and it applied to the people there.

It was with immense relief,



Left photos (top to bottom): Various celebrations in Tuke. Right photos: (top) a happy mother and child pose for posterity; (lower left) a typical classroom; (lower right) and an elderly leisurely sitting beside a young boy.



therefore, when on March 17, 2012 I greeted the archbishop, who had walked up the Pomio mountains, bringing with him two diocesan priests, including the parish pastor. This paved the way for me to plan a two-week return to Tuke during the Holy Week and Easter celebrations. Unfortunately, the weather was totally uncooperative and this time continuous rains, a swollen river and impassable streams closed the school down. It was a blessing in disguise however, as this allowed me to tap the school teachers and Catholic students for help, even though it meant that we had to pluck them out of their remote hamlets. The first batch of altar servers

was a disaster and I had to request the headmaster for more “trainable” ones, settling on seven youths ranging from adolescents to young fathers. Without the benefit of electricity, we celebrated our Holy Thursday “Last Supper” Eucharist at 3:00 p.m. to ensure we had enough daylight since darkness comes early in the rainforest. I was particularly insistent that my “12 apostles”—who all go around barefoot—scrub their legs and feet vigorously before the service! The “*Rot bilong Kruse*” (Way of the Cross) the next day was a truly memorable one. For the first time in over a week, the sun finally shone which allowed us to commemorate the stations passing

through the various hamlets. This was meant to rekindle faith in the places where they lived and not just in the mission station. The nearly three-hour celebration saw the faithful trekking through forests, climbing steep slopes and rambling down stony mountain paths reliving Jesus’ final passion, aided by a drama ensemble. Unspeakable horror almost befell us in the 10<sup>th</sup> station when a soldier-actor totally disregarded my explicit order “to remove only (the actor) Jesus’ top shirt but *not* his bottom *laplap* (waistcloth). Speedily—and unhesitatingly—an errant youth tugged away at the waistcloth! Mercifully, the inner loincloth held and scandal was averted. Not having a proper Easter candle, we had to make do with a gigantic tree trunk cut and decorated as a paschal candle, topped off with a small wax candle at its crest. In the darkness of the forest, that one little candle made such a difference as the Exultet was being sung—in Melanesian Pidgin, of course! The Easter mid-morning mass was a joy as the church was bathed in light with festive decorations appropriately expressive of the new life running through the community.

When my fortnight stay came to an end in mid-April 2012, it was like a case of *déjà vu*—with a difference. With their local pastor just a two days’ walk away and another priest at an equal distance, I hoped the two diocesan priests would be able to visit them more frequently and enable the faithful to celebrate the sacraments more regularly. I still left Tuke with a heavy heart but more tranquilly. As I continued my three-month sojourn through the various mountain villages, I incessantly encouraged young people to take heart and answer God’s call to be shepherds of His flock. ☒

## CONTEMPLATION IN ACTION

# Prophetic witnessing today

By Wilma Militante

### CONTEMPLATIVES IN ACTION

As members of our Salesian Family we are all called to be contemplatives in action. And not only that, we are all invited to have a contemplative view of all things and of every one like Don Bosco, our beloved spiritual father and the founder of our charismatic Salesian Family. A contemplative in action, he is defined by his contemporaries as living union with God in work and in prayer.

The spiritual life is a blend of contemplation and action, a harmony of prayer and work or vice versa. St. Francis de Sales, in his *Treatise on the Love of God* said that the authenticity of prayer is charity—love of God and neighbor manifested in our selfless service to others. The fruits of this are enumerated in Galatians 5: 25. St James, too, reminds us that faith without good works is nothing. St. Francis de Sales calls this intimacy of God in prayer—the ecstasy

of action wherein the soul is so much in rapt or completely engrossed in God's love and the marvel of that love and what the Lord has done in his or her life that he or she cannot help but share this in haste to others like Mary to Elizabeth, Andrew to his brother Simon, Magdalene to the Apostles, Don Bosco to the young, Blessed John Paul II telling the world not to fear God is with us and Mother Teresa giving God's love to the poorest of the poor.

Following are examples from ordinary lives of contemplation in action and prophetic witnessing given by Don Bosco Volunteers who bring Christ with them wherever they are. The Don Bosco Volunteers is a secular institute for women who love Don Bosco's spirit and choose to follow in his footsteps for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. In the 19th century St. John Bosco had already envisioned a novel type of consecrated life for "extern" Salesians

living in the world. Historically the Don Bosco Volunteers were founded as a lay association in 1917 by Blessed Philip Rinaldi, Don Bosco's third successor as Rector Major of the worldwide Salesian Family (<http://www.secularinstitutes.org/dbv.htm>).

### EXAMPLES FROM ORDINARY LIVES

**Rebbie** wakes up at four every morning and gratefully starts her day with a sincere prayer. She thanks the Lord for the gift of life and offers her whole being and all of her 24 hours to God—entrusting to Him everything the day might bring and everyone she gets to meet and work with. Then in solitude and silence she unites herself with God, praying the Lauds in union with the Church and meditating on the day's Gospel. And much more, she seals her early morning spiritual encounter with Holy Communion at a 6 o' clock Mass which she regularly attends before going to work. For





Left and above: Women and young people engaged in prayer and community work with Fr. Ramon Borja, SDB (in gray).

Rebbie, the Eucharist is the very heart of her day.

Rebbie holds a position of authority in her office and a delicate one at that. In all her dealings, she simply injects Gospel values in her work without her officemates, subordinates and top rank corporate bosses, the CEO included, noticing it. They admire her calmness in the midst of trying situations. They seek her advice in delicate corporate matters and every now and then, she is called upon to troubleshoot tangled administrative affairs. She is popular among both the rank and file employees with the powers that be in the company where she belongs. They respect her opinions and suggestions. And most of all, from the top to the bottom of the corporate ladder, she is a shoulder to cry on, an ear to unburden to, a mouth that speaks to them words of encouragement or fraternal correction. She is most

respected because of her witness of life. In fact, Rebbie's colleagues see her as ordinary as them in every way yet mysteriously inspiring and worth emulating. One time, she skipped eating lunch with her officemates just to attend the afternoon Mass after failing to do so in the morning because of performing troubleshooting for her boss. One of her lunch mates quipped, "*Di ka na kailangang magdasal, parang dasal na ang buhay mo* (You need not pray, your life is like a prayer already)."

Rhia is a head nurse-supervisor with a very tight schedule in a hospital. She calls her workplace her mission field. She gives seminars and workshops to young nurses and doctors, without failing to instill in morality and sacredness of life. Learning about her pious advocacy, particularly at the surge of the RH Bill promotion, her hospital Director expressed his total dismay on Rhia's

opposition to the said Bill campaign. To this, Rhia explained, "I am a Catholic nurse. We have laws that are legal but not moral. I will continue to enlighten our young nurses and mothers about God's commandments and the teachings of our Holy Mother Church on respect for human life." She went on to say "Doctor, I am a Christian first before being a nurse and I will do as my conscience dictates."

The director was piqued by her polite but firm remarks. From her peers, she received flak but she stood her ground since she is a very efficient nurse and well respected by her peers, loved by the patients and listened to by pregnant women whom she talked to on a one-to-one basis in the course of her rounds about the negative effects of contraceptives. To this day, she continues to be a spokeswoman of the Church on matters pertaining to life in her private capacity as a

concerned citizen and an upright and committed Christian. When asked what makes her so fearless to the extent that she even incurred the ire of a town mayor, she replied with a smile, “Prayer and zeal for souls.” Indeed she has a strong Eucharistic life and the refrain of her day is, “All for Jesus, Mary, Joseph and Don Bosco.”

**Lina** is a married woman totally immersed in the corporate world. She works in a multinational company which entails travels abroad. She, however, balances her being a loving wife and mother, her being a professional woman and dedicated parish servant-leader with prayer—the source of her strength. She proclaims Christ as center of her family life. Her amiability and kindness, honesty, competence and responsibility, commitment to family, profession and parish community make her a role model in her locality. She goes about her daily duties with evangelical simplicity. She has already surrendered everything in her life to God following the example of her model of life—Mary of Nazareth.

**Roger** is a 29-year-old bachelor and a junior executive. He works in a highly secular company dealing with computers based in one of the Asian countries. Roger comes home for a week during the Advent season and on Holy Week to recharge his spiritual batteries. As a department head, his presence and witness impacts the lives of 25 people under him. How? By his silent witness of a good and meaningful life. He sees in his profession a way to God, a professional spirituality. In a place that is multicultural and of different religious faith, a way of being and doing that is Christian is practiced at least in his department. He tries his best to live by Christian values and virtues instilled in him by his parents and school. These are put to the test daily and pose a great challenge to him. The practice of the patience of Job, kindness, courage under fire in



Above: Volunteers of Don Bosco proclaiming God's love through direct experiences with people.

defending a subordinate, knowledge and the needed competence and skills for an effective workforce, responsibility and a sense of humor and above all, growth in charity are all fruits of his prayer. Roger said, “Prayer makes my day, so I do begin it with a 15 to 20-minute prayer workout.” He continued telling, “I also try not to miss my Sunday Mass. It is the highlight of my week.” Roger narrated that there are a few Catholic churches in the country where he is based and the nearest one is 10 kilometers away. For him, Sunday Mass is nonnegotiable. When he was still new in the company, he even felt discriminated against because of his Catholic Christian faith. He was challenged by that and so he tried in his simple ways, to show how a good follower of Christ behaves in difficult and challenging moments. His perseverance and fidelity to holiness in daily life paid off. By putting Christ first, others second and himself last, he won the hearts of his peers, subordinates and bosses.

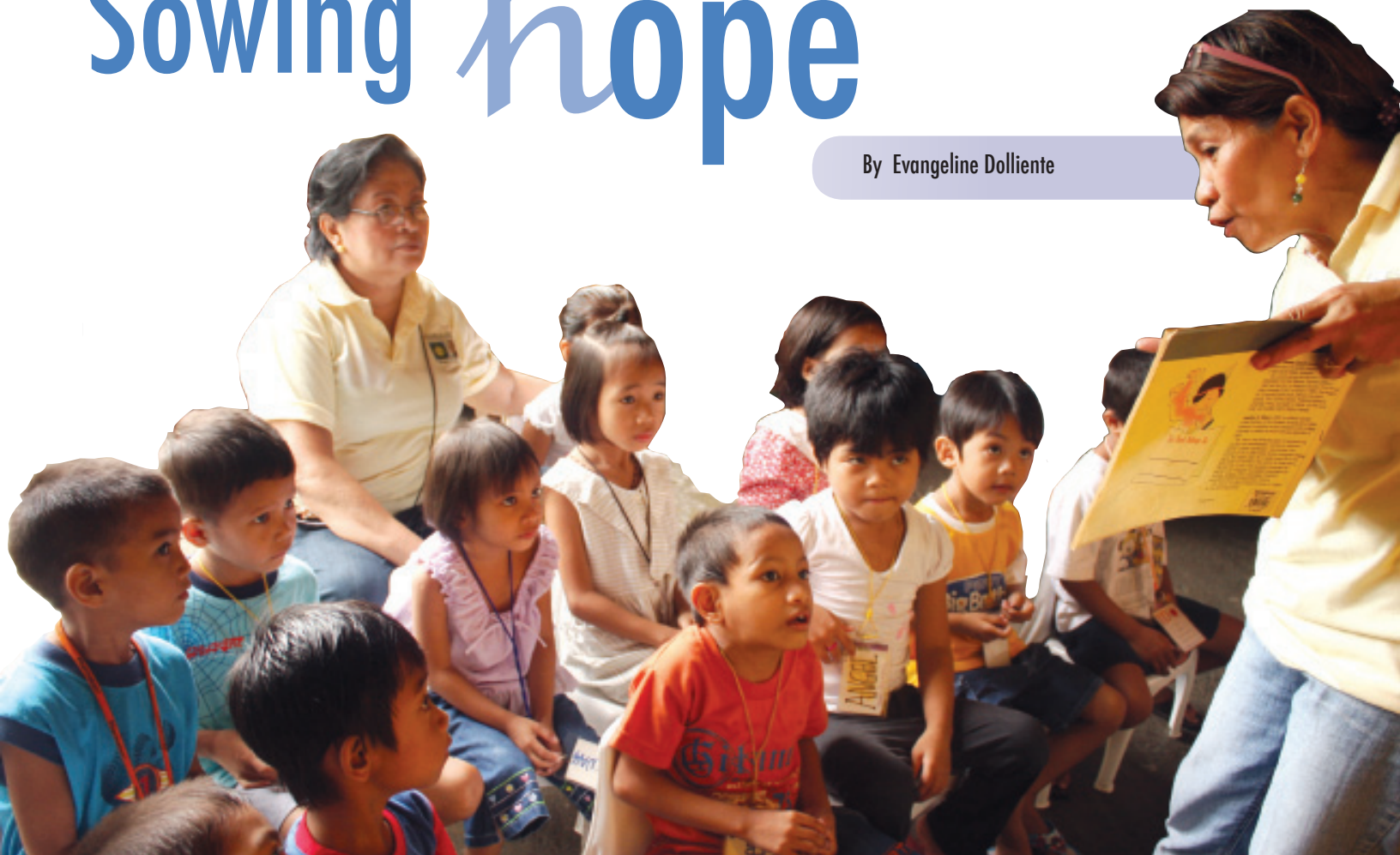
**THEY MAKE THE LOVE OF GOD KNOWN** Rebbie, Rhia, Lina and Roger are four ordinary persons giving God's love to others by going about their daily duties with

a heavenly view but with feet firmly rooted in the ground of everydayness. Committed Christians they are—firm believers of the grace of unity of prayer and life, of faith and action. They are living prayers because they live their prayers. In rapt prayer and in love with God they bring God's love to their families, profession, communities and friends. Wherever they are they continue God's love and saving action in their lives in the world in operative silence and hidden-ness like leaven in the dough, like light in the darkness transforming the places where God has put them into an effective environment of love, reconciliation, renewal, transformation and peace. Contemplatives in action, they perform their daily lives with serenity and joy working untiringly for the Kingdom in a world that rejects the divine. They remain a beacon of hope for those around them. Their filial and loving relationship with God deepens their intimacy and their respective works offered to God as prayer cements this union full circle at the end of every day. ☒

## REASON, RELIGION AND LOVING KINDNESS

# Sowing hope

By Evangeline Doliente



The name “Parañaque” according to Wikipedia is derived from the phrase “para na aque.” Today one might ask a cab driver to “stop here,” or “para na dito” in the vernacular. In the days of horse-drawn carriages and “kalesas” however, people spoke Spanish and would have said, “para na aquí.”

Parañaque has developed into an industrial center with super malls and corporate buildings on a grand scale but like most large-scale development on the fast-track, there are bleak areas where people struggle to keep body and soul together. Women and children are

often the most vulnerable victims of crime and violence.

While urban planners may dub the problem urban blight, members of the *Familia Asociacion Damas Salesianas* (FADS) have discovered the brightest rays of hope and promise in the midst of the darkest and most difficult situations.

FADS members have found that business acumen and managerial talent are keener and brighter when accompanied with a deep faith in God. As a way of life and a style of relating, Don Bosco’s “Preventive System” has already brought about genuine

transformation in the lives of many. Reason, religion and loving kindness are a powerful dynamic that awakens a person’s inner resources and sows hope where there is none.

FADS’s mission is to evangelize through human promotion while working for the entire formation of the person. It is sensitive to social realities and the signs of the times. Believing in the invisible action of grace, FADS members work with moms and kids with realistic optimism and are beginning to see wonderful results. They share their happy experience with us here.



Top to bottom photos: Youth and children are having fun and some learning activities with members of *Familia Asociacion Damas Salesianas (FADS)* during the "Paghubug Pag-asa Mission."



The *Familia Asociacion Damas Salesianas (FADS)*-Margarita Center has been sowing hope in the hearts and minds of mothers and children in Parañaque City since May 2008 when it launched a remarkable project called "Paghubug Pag-asa Mission." Their dream is to provide integral formation for vulnerable mothers and children living in extreme conditions of poverty.

Evangelization by means of human promotion is the key. Human promotion is the process by which men and women reach full development as they discover and satisfy their needs, are able to know their rights and duties by means of their personal work and participation in society, and help in building the common good.

In May 2011, FADS selected the Margarita Center Community in the Mary Help of Christians Parish, *Barangay Don Bosco*, Better Living, Parañaque City. They had gathered 50 children aged four to 13 and 36 mothers. "Paghubug Pag-asa Mission" was suddenly no longer a dream but a reality.

Their goal is to empower mothers to be productive members of the

community. The mothers enrolled in the program soon realize that "Paghubug Pag-asa Mission" is all about becoming a better person in very concrete terms. It means becoming a better parent, a better spouse and a better neighbor to those in need.

Integral formation includes adult catechesis, values formation, livelihood and skills training, health education, parenting and spiritual formation. A "Masigasig" award for mothers who dare to launch out and use the livelihood skills they have learned has many takers. Sixteen mothers have completed the program which includes Catechesis on the Creed (*Sumasampalataya*), Livelihood Training in Peanut Butter and Siomai Making and Health Education on Dental Home Care.

Change however poses a bigger challenge for mothers who must change old habits and old routines to keep up with the program. Some mothers discover that they need more time to adjust to the schedules, challenges and everything that beginning a new life entails.

Forty of 50 children have

completed the program in 2012. Special recognition is awarded to those who demonstrated the core values promoted. There is a reward for commitment and for enthusiasm. Kids who express a desire to know and love God and to serve others are encouraged. Likewise, children who give good examples and influence others to do good are also recognized. Learning the value of goodness and kindness and responsibility are all fruits of the Preventive System and the Salesian family spirit.

Young people warm up to the friendly and cheerful Salesian atmosphere. Values formation, catechism, creative arts, literacy and health, in addition to a feeding program provide a happy balance.

Tireless volunteers, benefactors and friends in the Salesian Family enable FADS to progress in their mission of opening minds and hearts to that most important truth, that regardless of the devastation around them, everyone is a child of God and He has a wonderful plan for each one of us! 📖

**P**aghubog Pag-asa (Shaping Hope) is really where good things happen. The following are true stories. They are heartwarming accounts from a group of children and from a mother of three whose lives have changed for the better. These happened simply because a small group of people with big hearts, brilliant minds and indomitable spirits use their special talent for organization and development to provide them with critically needed education, training and formation. Read how “Paghubog Pag-asa Mission” has brought light and joy to Judith and to Level 3 Children a lifechanging experience.



“Para sa akin, mas tumibay ang aking pananampalataya sa Diyos nang makilala ko Siya. Mas naintindihan ko ang aking pananampalataya, nabago rin ang mali kong pag-uugali, natuto akong magpatawad, magmahal at tumulong sa aking kapwa. Regular na akong nagsisimba tuwing Linggo. Natutunan ko po talaga na ipaglaban si Kristo sa aking buhay.

Nakitaan ko din ng pagbabago ang aking mga anak. Natuto silang magdasal bago at pagkatapos kumain

o matulog. Tumutulong na sila sa mga gawaing-bahay, sumusunod sa mga pinag-uutos at naging mas responsable sa mga kapatid.

Ang ibang bata naman na kasali sa misyon ay napuna kong natuto ng magsimba tuwing Linggo, makisalamuha sa ibang bata at umiwas sa pakikipag-away at pagsasalita ng masama.

Sa amin naman pong community, nagsisikap po ang mga magulang na dumalo sa mga pagtitipon. Madami silang natutunan sa pananampalataya, natutong makipagtulungan sa gawain pang-community at naging mas maunawain at mapagpasensiya sa mga asawa. Madami na rin ang umaa-attend sa Bible sharing o paglinayal sa Misa.

Nang maranasan naming masunugan, napagnilayan ng aming community na ito ay isang pagpukaw at pagtawag lamang ng Diyos. Para sa aming lahat, ito ay isang biyaya na nangyari upang higit na magtiwala sa Kanya.

Ang Damas Mission ay isang regalo ng Diyos sa aming lahat. Kung mabibigyan po kami ng pagkakataon na madala uli ang mission sa amin, ito ay lubusan naming ipagpapasalamat sa Diyos. Gaya ng iba, nadarama ko ang pagmamahal ng Diyos sa kanilang mga salita at gawa. Mahinahon nilang ipinapaliwanag kung bakit dapat o di dapat gawin o sundin ang isang bagay. Masigla silang nakikisalamuha at nakikipag-usap sa amin. Tunay po na mapagmahal, magagaling at matitiyaga ang mga teachers ng Damas.” — **Judith, mother of three**

“Sa Catechism, natutunan po namin ang higit na pagkilala, pagmamahal at paglilingkod sa Diyos. Gayundin ang mga buhay, aral at ehemplo ng mga sinaunang tao na nalalahad sa Biblia, ang kahalagahan ng Banal na Misa at ang dapat naming gawin sa loob nito, ang paglilingkod sa kapwa at pagsisimba. Sa Values, natutunan po namin ang magagandang ugali tulad ng pagtulong sa kapwa, paggalang, pagpapakumbaba, pagkamasunurin, hindi pagsisinungaling, at pagiging masipag. Natuto din kaming maging malikhaing sa pagdrawing, gumawa ng magandang larawan na mailalagay sa cards o poster sa bawat kapistahan tulad ng Pasko, New Year, Valentine’s Day, birthday greetings at pagpapasalamat.

Kami po ay unti-unting nagbabago—mas sumusunod sa utos ng Diyos, mas gumagalang at nakakatulong sa magulang, mas masipag mag-aral at tumaas ang mga grades sa iskul, parati ng nagsisimba at umiwas sa pakikipag-away.

Sa mga Damas teachers, naramdaman namin ang pagmamahal at kagustuhang kaming mapabuti. Mahinahon sila at may malasakit na pinapaliwanag kung bakit tama o mali ang isang sitwasyon at kung bakit dapat gawin at sundin ang magandang asal o kaugalian. Masaya at masigla ang mga Damas teachers sa pakikisalamuha sa amin at nadarama namin ang pagmamahal ng Diyos sa kanilang mga salita at gawa.

Sana po ay ipagpatuloy nila ang pagtuturo sa mga batang nangangailangan ng pagmamahal. Maraming salamat po sa lahat-lahat ng itinuturo nila sa amin. Alam po naming mahirap itong ginagawa nila pero andiyan sila imbes magpahinga sa kanilang tahanan.” — **Level 3 Children**



## MEDIA EDUCATION AND EVANGELIZATION CAMP FOR ORATORIAN AND STREET CHILDREN

# Witnesses of “Bro”

By Sr. Maria Socorro Bacani, FMA

More than 100 youth leaders from FMA oratory centers and from one VIDES outreach area gathered for a Media Camp entitled “*Saksi ni Bro @ Media.kom*” on April 13 to 16, 2012 at Don Bosco School, Manila and on April 20 to 23 at the Mary Help of Christians School in Minglanilla, Cebu.

“*Saksi ni Bro @ Media.kom*” literally means “witnesses of Brother.” It is a reference to a popular series on local television entitled “*May Bukas Pa*” which when translated means, “*There Is Still Tomorrow*.” Santino, the main character, is an orphan. Adopted by monks, he has a supernatural friend he calls “Bro.” The television series portrayed the simple faith of a child who had daily intimate chats with Jesus reminiscent of *Marcelino Pan Y Vino* which moviegoers enjoyed in the 1960s. The message is clear: miracles are possible for those who have faith.

“*Saksi ni Bro @ Media.kom*” participants ranged from 10 year olds to 28 year olds. They had already been exposed to media and were eager to learn how to be more intelligent and more critical consumers of media.

Mass communication, in essence, is something that dominates our perception of truth and reality and can have either a positive or negative



influence on a person and on children in particular.

Experts in Media Education engaged the campers in various forms of media and explained how each one could influence young peoples’ thinking, choices and actions.

Campers enjoyed the sessions and drew up a Camp Manifesto resolving to be vigilant users of media. A tour to GMA 7 and ABS-CBN, major television and radio stations, and to the Philippine Daily Inquirer, a leading broadsheet and its group of companies also in Cebu City thrilled the young.

“Good night talks” on Christian faith and Salesian dimensions of media engagement were inspiring. “*Saksi ni Bro @ Media.kom*” offered something much more profound and life-changing than media literacy as both FMA Social Communications and the Youth Ministry realized that what the TV series and the Media Camp had in

common was the powerful element of witnessing to “*Saksi ni Bro @ Media.kom*.”

With hearts aflame, the young people promised to be witnesses of Brother Jesus and as such, they would not only be critical and responsible users of media but would also learn to maximize the use of media as a potent means to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.


Entertainment columnist Nestor Torre once said that the series “*May Bukas Pa*” which enjoyed very good ratings was proof that viewers want to be inspired by the dramas they watch. “*Saksi ni Bro @ Media.kom*” Media Camp proved that kids have what it takes to make change happen. As “responsible masters of their feelings, actions and conscience,” they yearn to witness to Gospel values in their creative use of media. *Abangan...* 

PHOTO COURTESY OF SR. SOCCORO BACANI, FMA



**2012 bABBAd Immersion Camp.** Immersionist Francis (far left) Orlyn Hufancia of Tondo, Manila during bonding time with his foster family at *Barangay Hornalan*, Canlubang, Laguna. Francis was one of the 18 youth participants of the 2012 bABBAd Immersion Camp hosted by Mary Help of Christians Parish, Mayapa, Laguna on April 15-23, 2012.



**ASC-FIN.** Thirteen new Salesian Cooperators have made their Promise on March 18, 2012 during their Annual Convention held at the *Seminario ng Don Bosco*, Better Living Subdivision Parañaque City. They are Evelyn Ballesteros and Reggie Medalla (Canlubang Center), Evelyn Peregrin, Mayet Abrigo, Ferdie Briones, Zeny Linsangan and Malou Del Rosario (Parañaque Center), Annabelle Tronco, Rowena Manlapaz, Delia Gotera, Imelda Retales and Menchie Osial (Makati Center), and Amelia Tabios (Tondo Center). Also in photo are SDB Delegates Fr. Felino Gueco, Fr. Roberto Ma. Roxas, Fr. Paul Bicomong and Fr. Ramon Borja.

## SALESIAN WORLD NEWS



**Rome, Salesian Bulletin Editors' Meeting.** Provincial Delegate for Social Communication-FIN Fr. Noel Osial, SDB and Salesian Bulletin Production Manager Ms. Maria Geraldine Miranda in a group discussion during the Salesian Bulletin Editors' Meeting held on May 17-20, 2012 at the Salesian Headquarters in Rome. The international assembly was attended by Salesian Confreres and lay collaborators involved in the production of the Salesian Bulletin in their respective countries. Also attended the event as member of Philippine delegation was Blue Collar Magazine Editor Ms. Teresa Tunay.

# My mother's heart

Published in Philippine Star  
on Mothers' Day, May 13, 2012

By Fr. Joel N. Camaya, SDB

Saint Therese of Lisieux wrote: "The loveliest masterpiece of the heart of God is the heart of a mother." These words are affirmed in the womb, even before the child is born. For even if the fetus has a heart of its own, able to pump blood into its incipient form, its lungs do not yet function and it is the mother that supplies it with oxygen-rich blood. The beautiful dynamics goes beyond the womb: the mother's heart pulsates for the child, continuously giving it life. Traditionally seen as the organ for the passions, the heart has become the symbol of love. From this enduring symbol I recall two of the many beautiful qualities of my mother: *care* and *endurance*—the heart of fire and the heart of bronze.

**CARE.** To give birth to a child, to nurture it as it grows is a given for all mothers. Mommy was hands-on in this and much more: she was my first teacher from whom I learned the basic skills—reading, writing, arithmetic. She taught me how to pray and from her I learned many practical skills that one cannot do without.

But my mother was also a school teacher. For almost 40 years she taught high school mathematics.

In an era when there were no computers, she managed to work and care for naughty children like us. When she came home she prepared

dinner, tutored us and tucked us into bed. She saw to it that everyone was all right.

**ENDURANCE.** I have always seen my mother as a strong woman. When I was a little kid she would take me to Manila—to Divisoria, which was to me a hostile jungle. I clung to Mommy as she walked past the throngs of people. Her skirt, which I clutched tightly, was my refuge. Nothing in the world made me feel more secure.

Mommy was able to stand on her own for several years when my father had to work abroad. It was not easy taking care of five children who occasionally caused her heartaches, but there she was, the ever patient, persevering mother who raised us up in those early years. She had an amazing inner strength that inexplicably gave her a high tolerance for the pain brought on by her chronic illnesses.

The beating of my mother's heart came to an end last March.

One morning, after arriving from an errand, my father went to the bedroom. My mother was lying down solving a crossword puzzle. Seeing him, Mommy invited him to take a snack. He told her that he needed to rest and would join her later. She told him that she would cook *turon* (sweet banana rolls). Daddy dozed off for a while and saw a fleeting vision of

himself dead, which prompted him to ask: "If I were dead, who would take care of my wife?" He woke up and looked for her. He saw her in the kitchen: she was lying down, gasping for breath. He cried out to her and put a pillow under her. He tried to carry her but could not. He asked for help but she breathed her last breath even before they could make it to the hospital. It was a heart attack.

Shakespeare put it thus:

*...and by a sleep, to say we end  
The heart-ache, and the thousand Natural  
shocks  
That Flesh is heir to? 'Tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wished.*

Yet I would like to see the event this way: on that quiet day, Mommy's heart that had consistently pulsated to give life wanted to leap and burst forth to proclaim her love for her husband and her children. After all, only a few days before, she was able to call all her five children dispersed in different parts of the world; and now she died serving her husband. She was content. It was Jesus' *consummation est* on the cross. She saw to it that everyone was all right. It was the yearning of my mother's heart, a true masterpiece indeed. ■




PHOTO COURTESY OF FR. JOEL CAMAYA, SDB

# no where to go?

## press these numbers

- Don Bosco Pugad - SJB Parish Compound Makati City (02) 8438517
- Tuloy sa Don Bosco - Muntinlupa City (02) 7750484 to 85
- Laura Vicuña Center - Quezon City (02) 7232342
- TVET Center - Mandaluyong City (02) 5316866
- TVET Center - Makati City (02) 8175807
- TVET Center - Mabalacat, Pampanga (045) 8933899
- TVET Center - Calamba, Canlubang Laguna (049) 5491778
- TVET Center - Tondo, Manila (02) 2545659
- TVET Center - Carolina, Naga City (054) 4728755
- TVET Center - Banquerohan, Legazpi City (052) 4812532
- TVET Center - San Jose, Nueva Ecija (044) 5113953
- TVET Center - Pasil, Cebu (032) 2610010
- TVED Center - Punta Princesa, Cebu (032) 2732301
- TVET Center - Negros Oriental, Dumaguete (035) 2250384
- TVET Center - Dumangas, Iloilo (033) 3612500
- TVET Center - Victorias, Negros Occidental (034) 3993227

# and you've got a friend



**"As the Father has loved me,  
so I have loved you; remain in my love."  
(John 15:9)**

**To fall in love with God is the greatest of  
all romances; to seek Him, the greatest  
adventure; to find Him, the greatest of all  
human achievements. (St. Augustine)**

# Falling in love with God

Nothing is more practical than finding God.  
That is, in falling in love with God, in a quite absolute way.  
What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will  
affect everything in your life—your desires and motivations, your  
BEING and your DOING, your comings and your goings.  
It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning,  
and what you will do with your evenings.  
It will decide how you will spend your days for the rest of your life.  
It will clarify your vision and mission in the Church and in the  
world.  
It will decide how you will respond in love and act in love in  
every way despite your human limitations and weaknesses.  
It will decide what you will choose in freedom, consciously  
and joyfully to be, what values you will live by, who and what  
truly animates your life.  
It will decide how you will serve others in a selfless way,  
even to the point of laying down your life for them.  
Your daily dying in love will decide how you will spend  
even your leisure time—  
what you will read, what music you will listen to and dance to,  
what songs you will sing, what movies and TV programs you will  
watch, what will catch your attention in the internet and connect  
to, and even the places you will go;  
how you will spend your free time responsibly and well;  
who your companions are and your conversations.

It will decide your friendships and the people you are sent to  
serve.

In our case as Salesians—most especially the young;  
what gives you joy and what makes you grateful, what breaks  
your heart as well.

Most amazing, in spite of your sinfulness, humbly aware that  
you are a redeemed sinner  
trying your best with God's grace to overcome your faults and  
sinful patterns, your life is transformed little by little day by  
day in every way without you being conscious of it.  
Till one day you will be caught by surprise that someone in all  
simplicity will recognize the Christ in you.

Grace will make you humbly claim with St. Paul, "It is no  
longer I who live; it is Christ living in me."

Falling in love with God is a grace and a miracle.

It is the greatest freedom—the freedom to love, the freedom  
to be and to see God in everything and in every one.

Fall in love with God. Grow in love with God. Stay in love  
with God. And it will decide everything, till eternity.

**—Adapted from "Falling in Love With God" by Pedro Arrupe  
S.J. which moved a member of the Secular Institute of the  
Don Bosco Volunteers (VDB) to write her version based on her  
Salesian experience of falling in love with God in the spirit of  
"Da mihi animas..."**