

# DON BOSCO EASTERN AFRICA

SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO PUBLICATION

SALESIAN FAMILY BULLETIN  
2<sup>ND</sup> QUARTER, MAY 2013



## The Vicar of Christ



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**The Salesian Bulletin was founded by St. John Bosco in 1877. 'Don Bosco Eastern Africa' is the Salesian Bulletin published by the Salesians of Don Bosco, Eastern Africa Province Nairobi, Kenya.**

*We welcome letters to the Editor. Send your comments and suggestions.*

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# From the EDITOR

## Pope Francis, a Great Communicator

The first words of Pope Francis “Buona Sera” revealed the great communicator in him. On the evening of March 13<sup>th</sup> on that rainy evening in Rome, the simplicity and straightforwardness of the Cardinal from Argentina, Jorge Mario Bergoglio captured the heart of millions, Catholics and non-Catholics around the world. With the few words that followed he created a relationship with everyone across the world. In his simple and unassuming words and gestures he made a connection with everyone. Ever since his election, his every move, gesture, look and his going out of the protocol to say hello to the eagerly waiting crowd created a relationship as never seen before. His very body language communicates hundreds of unspoken messages to his audience. His style is relational. That “good evening” from the balcony of St. Peters Basilica seems to come to the mind of everyone, every time he makes a public appearance.

Communication creates relationship. While communicating, one passes on information which creates relationship with the other, in other words “who I am for you and who you are for me”. When we communicate we send messages of relationship and the way we communicate defines the quality of the relationship we are intending to create. Communication is the backbone of all we do in our ministry.

Pope Francis spoke of poverty, peace, mercy justice etc. but an important aspect to consider is his communication style. So far many people have written or spoken about Pope Francis’s ‘going outside the box’ to reveal his warm personality through which he demonstrated his closeness to the people.

Pope Francis’s greetings, “good evening” on 13<sup>th</sup> March, “good morning” and “have a good Sunday; eat well” of 17<sup>th</sup> March at the Angelus, though simple, are quite complex that go beyond just few words of introduction. They were not the official liturgical greetings but warm, simple and fraternal greetings. These greetings sounded like greetings among equals. One of his remarks, “that book did me good but don’t think I’m just advertising one of my cardinal’s books!” was a personal sharing coupled with fun.

In his address to the journalists he demonstrated his sensitivity to all irrespective of one’s religion or background. He said, “Given that many of you do not belong to the Catholic Church, and others are non-believers, I shall impart this blessings from the heart, in silence, on each on you, respecting each one’s conscience, but knowing that each one of you is a son or daughter of God. May God bless you”. Everyone even those who were not believers felt respected, no one was excluded.

After a Sunday Mass at the St. Ann’s Parish in the Vatican he went out of his way to greet the faithful like a parish priest. This demonstrated his pastoral heart more effectively than any other official Church blessing. Pope Francis is a great communicator

*Sebastian Koladiyil*

# DON BOSCO RELATES

DON BOSCO EDUCATOR

## IT'S ABOUT THE BAD GUYS TREMBLING BEFORE THE GOOD AND NOT THE GOOD TREMBLING BEFORE THE BAD

I was a lively and attentive boy who, with mum's permission went to the various festivals where there were acrobats and magicians. I always put myself in the front row, eyes fixed on their movements with which they tried to distract the audience. Little by little I could see their tricks; returning home, I repeated them for hours. But often the moves did not produce the desired effect. It wasn't easy to walk on that blessed rope between two trees. How many tumbles, how many peeled knees! And how many times I was wanted to throw everything into the air ... Then I started again, sweaty, tired, sometimes even disappointed. Then, a little by little, I was able to get it together; I could feel the soles of my bare feet clinging to the rope; becoming one with my footsteps and I then did as I wanted, glad to repeat and to invent other movements. That's why, when I spoke to the boys, I said to them:

"Let's hold on to easy things, but let's do it with perseverance." There you have it: my down-to-earth pedagogy, the result of so many victories and as many defeats, with the stubbornness that was one of my most marked characteristics.

That's how my style came into being, to educate without using big words, without any great ideological schemes, without references to many famous authors. That was how my pedagogy was born: I learned on the meadows of Becchi, later on the streets of Chieri, later still in prisons, in the streets, in the alleys of Valdocco. A pedagogy built in a courtyard.

I dared to prove it a few years later when I went to Chieri to continue my studies and was accepted by the teacher, in front of the whole class, with a not very exciting sentence: *"This is a guy or a large mole or a great talent"*. It made me feel awkward in the extreme; I remember coping with these words: *"That's something beyond the pale, Sir: I am a poor young man who wants to do his duty and progress in studies"*.

Then there was that blessed dream when I was 9-10 years old

(the dream which was repeated many more times!) that I would get hammered, and the desire to become a priest for the boys became stronger ... And then I did something that didn't make a genius of me, but in fact, achieved a beautiful victory in my character, a real breakthrough; i.e., stretch out your hand to ask for help, something just to realise my dream. I would admit a little later to a Salesian: "You don't know how much this begging cost me". With my proud temperament, it was certainly not easy to be humble enough to ask. My courage was empowered by a high level of trust in Providence; and also what I had learned from my mother. At her school I had learned one rule that led me everywhere: "When I encounter a problem, treat it as if I found the road ahead blocked by a big boulder; if I can't remove it, I just turn around."

And I assure you: I found many large boulders on my path. I shall briefly mention some of them:

1860, for example, was a typically difficult year. Fr Cafasso, my friend, confessor and spiritual director





had died,: how much I missed his presence, his advice and his help with finances.

Then, from the Government side, I encountered serious difficulties, authentic “boulders”: targeted searches which were disastrous to Valdocco, as if I were a criminal! My boys were living in fear, while armed guards entered every where. The searches continued, creating a climate of fear and uncertainty. I wrote to the Minister of the Interior, Louis Farini, for an interview. I had the guts to tell him with humble determination: *“For my kids I demand justice and restoration of honour so that they don’t lack the bread of life”*. I know that he took a great risk because these men were an anticlerical Government, but I didn’t lack the necessary courage. And so gradually the searches stopped.

I never gave up! I said to the boys: *“The courage of the bad guys is not what makes others afraid. Be brave and you’ll see them fold their wings”*. A French benefactor from Lyon had sent me a holy picture with a phrase I have never forgotten because it served as a guide: *“Be with God like the sparrow that feels the branch shake but still continues to sing, knowing that it has wings”*. It



wasn’t just a poetic expression, but an act of courageous confidence in the Providence of the Lord, because He alone *“is the master of our hearts”*.

When they were about to leave for their holidays, I used to say this to my kids: *“Be men and not branches! Lift your head high, walk straight in the service of God, within the family and outside, in the Church and in the square. What is human respect? A papermachè monster that does not bite. What are the impertinent words of these bad guys? Soap-bubbles that disappear in an instant. We cannot cure adversaries and their taunts.*

*Remember that knowledge without conscience is nothing but the ruin of the soul.”*

I never got tired of instilling into their little heads: *“Give glory to God with your conduct, consolation to your relatives and your superiors. Otherwise a young, undisciplined ‘lazybones’, will be a disgraceful youth, a burden to his parents, a weight to his superiors, and a weight for himself”*.

The future would arise from Valdocco, “good citizens and honest Christians” of which the world has much need.

# THE GUYS LACK MORE IN LIVELINESS THAN IN WICKEDNESS



## DON BOSCO RELATES

Thanks to my mother’s maternal presence in the Pinaridi House (where the Salesian work began) there was this straightforward style of human relationships, made up of warm patience, understanding and correction, in perfect family style. With so many at home, the discipline was necessary because all were not involved in creating

‘Bedlam’. Discipline reduced it to a minimum, but “short deals make long friends” as she, in her innate folk-wisdom, summed up her outcomes.

Many years passed and with a rich experience of good results, I could say that “With guys, the punishment fits the crime.” I wanted to make it clear that a punishment must serve to improve things and not make them worse. A brief reduction of affection, a sad look, a more reserved and serious attitude,

a little word in the ear said with gentleness and patience, were ways I was using to correct and prevent possibly incorrect behaviours.

Of the boys accepted, not everyone was like Dominic Savio. It happened one day that a poor assistant, probably not well accepted by the older ones, lost patience and went on to yell some deafening shouts in an attempt to impose himself. He had created a climate of resistance that could lead from one moment to the next into a dangerous form of uncontrolled insubordination. Everyone expected that I would say something; I did, after the evening prayers, at the "good-night".

With a very serious face taken to depict our education style, I showed them the disappointment to know that one of them had been treated so harshly and that on his part he had shown a grave lack of respect and obedience to whoever was in charge of maintaining discipline. To put the record straight, I finished: "On the one hand they are never abused, on the other no more violence". I was given the classic shot, 'to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds'. Then I paused, my face began to smile and I resumed my talk: "I wish that the love you bear to all accomplishes even the impossible ... I am sorry for the beating you took, but I cannot just take them off." I was able to break the ice; everyone laughed, I waited for silence and again wished everyone a good night.

The experience taught me that it is much easier to get irritated, to threaten than to try to persuade with good manners. It was like an exercise-spring that causes exhaustion sometimes, but I knew that certain difficult, rebellious and grumpy temperaments I could win over only with love, patience and meekness. In practice, it left only getting down to goodness, speaking from the heart, which corrects with love and gentleness.

The guys in general, typically make mistakes more from thoughtlessness than out of malice. And some educators, driven by excessive haste and impatience, commit mistakes more serious than the deficiencies of these same guys. Not infrequently I realized that some who never pardoned others were very sensitive and quick to excuse themselves.

And when one uses two weights and two measures in arbitrary form, educators end up committing mistakes and blunders. I often remind my Salesians that boys are "small psychologists" when judging their educators, teachers and

and expect others to say 'yes' to their games and their dreams.

By that time I had adopted a foolproof method to educate to the good: remain always among the boys. I wanted my Salesians as "playground educators". Open to dialogue, creative, vigilant but not suspicious, there but not stuffy, but pleasant and bright, true friends.

It was what I defined as help: a qualified presence, never neutral, always proactive; a help that was pleasant, an active and qualified presence. A way of being-with-the-young, alongside them. "Being in the yard", to share hopes and dreams with kids, to build together



assistants and the shape, tone and the carelessness with which they take advantage of their authority. I always wish my dear Salesians would know to wait for the right time to make the necessary correction; never driven by anger or revenge. And that they would never forget that kids, the young people need to be taken one by one, day by day, to direct them to the Lord because only He knows how to design his divine face in them. And that they would always carry with them, my dear Salesians, a medicine which is essential and foolproof (though not found in any pharmacy): before you say 'yes' to the Lord, the young people want

a better and worthy future, without barriers of mistrust. The courtyard, as a "sacred" place of friendship and encounter where friendly confidence is born, where the teacher climbs down from the chair, no longer has in hand the class's diary, where he does not apply just to the qualifications achieved as to what he is, for values which he expresses, for the ideals that animate him.

The young man, even the most rebellious, lets himself be influenced only by kindness and patience. For this, I suggested to my Salesians: "More than just the head of a superior you should have the heart of a father".

# I Always Needed Everything

## DON BOSCO RELATES

I was born poor, and yet in my hands have been incredible sums, which I never attached to the heart. For me being poor meant being free, the true freedom that the Lord had taught us by example and words. Free, not fettered! Poor as I was, I knew and frequented many 'well off'. I had an obsession that was not always understood, indeed, I raised a hornet's nest of criticism tedious and suffocating. I said and I repeated often: "Charity is not done by the rich, but we do it for them, thus offering the opportunity to do a little good". Clearer than this ... I was convinced that "there is no one who dares to tell gentlemen the truth". I remember writing a letter which, despite its brevity, managed to disturb a wealthy banker often in his sleep: "You must absolutely save your soul, but you must give to the poor all your superfluities: I pray God to grant you this extraordinary grace".

I have written thousands of letters; the majority of them to solicit grants from the public bodies and from the benefactors. In all, though, there is always a "Thank you", a word of sincere gratitude. I had learned it from my mum! I said: "It is not possible for those who have gratitude not to have even the other virtues."

### I lived, asking and thanking.

Although I did not know and, therefore, I never used the word "marketing", I was using this technique – in my own way –, and how! Here's how I expressed myself: "We are at a time when you have to work. The world has become materialistic, so you have to work and make known the good that you do". The donations which I received, modest or generous, were not gathering dust in a safe; the benefactors were pleased to see where their donations were

helping. And they were also ... encouraged to continue!

To thank was always considered a strict duty of justice. So I lived and so I taught in my petty pedagogy every day. To the guys I used to repeat: "We always feel sorry for the ungrateful, because they're unhappy." Ingratitude was for me one of the worst forms of blindness because it didn't let us see the benefits, the gestures of love, the signs of the fatherly goodness of God. And here the catechesis 'floated in' by which Mamma Margaret helped us to understand how God manifests himself in life's



events, happy or not: and she was always found enough reasons to give thanks from the heart. Appreciation is the heart's memory, because only the heart has the ability to remember. Whoever thanks carries in their heart the love of God and rejoices at this. We are what we remember! My boys breathed this atmosphere. It was certainly a moment of profound emotion which I felt that night, on the eve of my name-day, when I heard a knock at the door of my office, a bare room. When I opened it, I found Felice Reviglio and Carlo Gastini who came to offer me greetings; then, they offered me two small silver hearts as a token of gratitude. I remained speechless for such an eloquent gift that I had received; that gesture made me understand that the right road had been chosen, because these guys

had figured out that blessed and wonderful family spirit which they supported so much. And there I was, not even knowing for how long, staring at those two small hearts, while my eyes filled with tears!

The years spent in Chieri, first as a student and then as a seminarian (10 wonderful years!), had also been years of many sacrifices and, sometimes, even in hunger. The bowl of soup that Mr. Pianta gave me for the various works in his bar wasn't enough for the stomach of a robust eighteen-year old. Joseph Blanchard helped me as he could. His mother was selling fruit in the market; I often took away some apples, chestnuts and other fruits. Certain favours, which benefit an empty stomach, are not easily forgotten. And so, many years later, I was in Chieri, about noon. I was chatting with some priests who were my companions in the seminary, when, just over the wall I saw someone pass who I could never really forget, my friend Blanchard. I introduced him to my fellow priests as a distinguished benefactor. And I told the story of the fruit of many years earlier. Then I invited him to come with me to visit at Valdocco. This fact occurred in 1876. Ten years later, my friend finally managed to keep his word. I wasn't well. There were lots of difficulties in the porter's lodge, as many in the waiting room. "Tell him, at the very least, that Blanchard came to find him". I recognised his voice and invited him in. We chatted for a long time. When it was lunch time I apologized for not being able to get up, but told the secretary: "Will you make a place for this friend of mine in the Superiors refectory, in my place". And so an elderly gentleman, quite clumsily, that day sat among those who guided the young Salesian Congregation. It was the least I could do for him, after 50 years, my thanks ...



# Francesco di Roma

From the moment he appeared at the central balcony of St. Peter's, Pope Francis signaled that he intended to do things differently from his predecessor. In his humility and informal address to the faithful, he has indicated the shape of things to come at the Vatican.

Pentecost came early this year for the Roman Catholic Church. On a usually chilly and rainy March

Vatican II Catholics who have felt increasingly ignored and alienated for a long time.

The new pope has also beguiled many non – Catholics, as well as mass the media that is often cynical about religion and its representatives. After the weariness that has enveloped the entire church over the past few years, the 76 year old – “Francis of Rome”

occasion by his predecessors, he was dressed only in the white papal cassock with a pewter pectoral cross around his neck. He did not gesticulate with outstretched hands as almost all previous popes had done. Instead he asked the tens of thousands of people gathered in the square below to “pray over” him silently before he gave his first *Urbi et Orbi* blessing to the city and



evening during Lent, Catholics around the world were stunned by the historic announcement that a Jesuit from Argentina – Jorge Mario Bergoglio – had just been elected Pope. The former Archbishop of Buenos Aires chose to call himself “Francesco”, taking the name of the radical and universally popular mystic- saint from Assisi. Amazing as it sounds, he was the first pope ever to do so.

In the week since his election, Pope Francis has demonstrated simplicity of style – in both words and gestures – that stands in refreshing contrast to the cultivated elegance that characterized the pontificate of Benedict XVI. Although highly cultured, his common man's touch has stirred up the hopes of many believers, especially those so called

has appeared on the scene in a similar way to that of the elderly John XXIII more than half a century ago. People are saying that Papa Francesco, like Papa Giovanni, has thrown open the windows of the church to let in some fresh air.

“During these days we have felt the wind of Pentecost shake our souls!” exclaimed Cardinal Angelo Comastri, Vicar of Vatican City, during a Mass last Sunday with the new Pope. “We are rediscovering the simplicity and the fervor of the early beginnings of our faith,” he said.

That was immediately evident when Pope Francis stepped on the balcony of St Peter's Basilica on the evening of his election. Shunning the red shoes and *mozzetta* (shoulder cape) worn for the

the world. Many wept. Then with a break with custom, he recited the special blessing rather than sang it.

“The diocesan community of Rome has its bishop,” he announced in his unscripted first comments. Never once (then or since) did he refer himself as Pope or Pontiff. “And now let us begin this journey: Bishop and people – this journey of the Church of Rome, which presides in charity over all the churches”, he said. He appeared to stress further that point last Sunday at his first angelus. Although he knows several languages, he spoke at the noon time gathering only in Italian. It was yet another break with previous custom.

Given this emphasis on being bishop of Rome, and judging by



each one of you, respecting the conscience of each person, but knowing that each one of you is a child of God.” Although a few catholic journalists seemed confused (and even upset) that he did not make the traditional sign of the cross over the gathering, the non-Catholics were moved by what they perceived was his sensitivity towards them.

Emphasizing the inexhaustible mercy of God has emerged as an early theme in his pontificate. His Episcopal motto, which he has kept as Pope, also emphasizes God’s mercy - *miserando atque eligendo* - “by showing mercy and by choosing”.

The new Pope is also a determined man and, though he obviously enjoys the company of others, he is something of a loner as well. He doesn’t even have a private secretary. And though his love and concern for the poor is evident, and his simple lifestyle is eloquent, he has also been seen as a conservative on many ecclesial issues. Of course Good Pope John Paul was too. And so the world must be patient with Francis of Rome. It would be unwise and unfair for people to place all their hopes and aspirations for church renewal and reform on the shoulders of one poor man. As he said last week, “Christ is the centre, not the Successor of Peter”.

**Robert Mickens  
Tablet**

the handful of addresses and few ceremonies he’s had, one might deduce that the new Pope is taking steps to purify the papacy of its monarchical trappings and court-like ambience. During the transfers from the Vatican to the Domus Sanctae Marthae residence immediately after his election, for example he refused to take the papal limousine. Instead he rode in the coach with other cardinals. When he made an outing to Santa Maria Maggiore a couple of days later, he again declined to ride in “his” luxury Mercedes and climbed into a Volkswagen Passat driven by Vatican gendarmes.

Of course, this is all symbolic. Only as his pontificate unfolds will we see how much substantial reform he will undertake. An encouraging sign came last week when he temporarily reconfirmed all the heads of major Vatican offices, saying he wanted to take more time for “reflection, prayer and *dialogue*” before making any permanent appointments. The eventual appointment of a new Secretary of State will be the first indication of the direction in which he hopes to move the Church.

Regarding the liturgy, it looks like the days of Latin and Lace and the obsession with ceremonial accoutrements from the Tridentine period have come to an abrupt halt. Pope Francis is obviously more comfortable with the “noble simplicity” of the post-Vatican II liturgy. At mass with cardinal electors the day after his election,

he had the free – standing altar returned to the Sistine Chapel and celebrated “facing the people” rather than *ad orientem* at the high altar.

He also politely put aside the homily in Latin that the Secretariat of State had prepared for him (which is an old tradition) and spoke extemporaneously in Italian – from the Lectern instead of from the presider’s chair.

In fact he has never spoken “from the throne” during a liturgy. And his vestments have been tasteful and contemporary. Even at the huge Mass to inaugurate the pontificate he used a simple winter white mitre and chasuble that he wore regularly in Buenos Aires.

“Ah, how I would like a church that is poor and that is for the poor”, Pope Francis confessed in an audience last Saturday to journalists and media professionals. That evidently means a church that is humble and respectful of the beliefs of others, too. “Since many of you do not belong to the Catholic Church and others are non-believers”, the new Pope said at the end of the audience, I offer this heartfelt blessing in silence, to





# Rector Major's Letter to Pope Francis



On 19<sup>th</sup> March, at the Mass for the beginning of Pope Francis' Petrine Ministry, the Rector Major had a letter delivered to the Pontiff. Herewith is the complete text.

Your Holiness, I am writing to you on behalf of the Salesian Congregation and the entire Salesian Family to express sentiments of tribute and our best wishes at your election as Bishop of Rome and Supreme Pontiff. I am

writing on this day of the solemn inauguration of your Pontificate; may it be an enduring one, replete with all God's blessings. We knew that we had a great Pastor in Benedict XVI, and we are now grateful to the Lord for having given us another great Pastor in his Successor, in you, Your Holiness and beloved Pope Francis.

As Christians and Salesian Religious, it is our desire now

to express our joy at your appointment. We renew our loyalty and assure you of the filial respect for you that we have inherited from Don Bosco. He often expressed this in words full of affection and faith when speaking of Peter's Successor.

"Whoever is united with the Pope is united with Christ!" (MB VIII,567) "We will be absolutely respectful of the Apostolic See in everything, anywhere, any time, wherever the Lord may call us" (MB XV,249). "For me the Pope's wish is a command" (MB V,874) "His word must be our rule in everything and for everything" (MB VI,494)

Thus spoke our Founder Don Bosco and this is how we feel in our hearts today.

I would like to tell you, Your Holiness, that immediately after your election was announced I spontaneously and joyfully recalled the beautiful and unforgettable experience of Church at Aparecida, in May 2007, where I had the grace of knowing you and greeting you personally. Together we took part in the work there, the celebrations and meetings at the 5th General



Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops; we met again at the meeting of Argentine Bishops, which you presided at, so we could establish the place and arrangements for the Beatification of the then Venerable Ceferino Namuncurá. I will never forget your words, full of esteem for the work of our Salesian confreres in Patagonia, and your intervention so that Chimpay could be the place for the celebration.

I am well aware of your closeness and affection for the Salesians, especially at the Almagro community where Fr Enrique Pozzoli, who was your spiritual director, lived; and for Fr Lorenzo Massa, founder of the San Lorenzo Football Team. I was very much appreciative of your testimony on behalf of our Coadjutor Brother, Blessed Artemides Zatti, when you were the Jesuit Provincial, and for your fatherly concern, as Archbishop of Buenos Aires, for our confreres. I have always experienced much joy at your well-known devotion to Mary Help of Christians which so many of our confreres recall.

From the moment of your election and when you presented yourself, we have been fascinated by the name you took as Pontiff, a name that picks up many of your own characteristics and which proclaims a programme of renewal in the Church, returning it to its true identity and to the Gospel through simplicity, austerity, and keeping its gaze fixed on the Lord Jesus.

Your Holiness, we welcome and make our own your wish to have “the courage, yes the courage to walk in the Lord’s presence, with his Cross; to build the Church on the blood of the Lord poured out on the Cross and to confess his glory: Christ Crucified. And so the Church will move on ahead.”

In fidelity to the Church and our Founder Don Bosco, we accept this invitation of yours, Your Holiness, and we promise that we will always keep it present in our personal



lives, our pastoral choices and our apostolic programmes.

We assure you of our prayers. May the Holy Spirit assist you in the delicate task Providence has entrusted to you and may the Virgin Mary always be your Help in your ministry.

Along with this letter we are sending you, as a sign of our closeness, a statue of Mary Help of Christians. It would be a great gift for us if we could present it to you one 24th of May, in Turin in the

Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, which Don Bosco built with so much love. Perhaps in 2015, when we celebrate the second centenary of his birth.

In a spirit of filial obedience, today and always we assure you of our devotion and affection.

**Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva**  
**Rector Major of the Salesians of**  
**Don Bosco**  
**ANS**





# Unusual Facts About Pope Francis

The fact that Pope Francis has only one lung is just one of 10 unusual facts about Pope Francis. Besides being a pope with one lung, Pope Francis has washed and kissed the feet of Aids patients in a hospice, has been trained as a chemist, and has criticized priests who refuse to baptize babies born to single mothers, reported The Guardian on March 13, 2013.

For many Catholics and non-Catholics who are wondering whether a pope with one lung will have the strength and stamina to deal with controversial topics like sex scandals, Pope Francis' life as a child, teen, young man, and former Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio will speak for itself.

## 1. Born as the son of an Italian railway worker

Pope Francis was born as Jorge Mario Bergoglio on Dec. 17, 1936, in Buenos Aires, Argentina's capital city, to Italian immigrants Mario José Bergoglio, a railway worker, and his wife, Regina María Sívori, a housewife. Growing up among five siblings with hard-working parents gave Pope Francis the values which define him today; family,

love, charity, humility, frugality, the ability to connect with people, compassion, and being down to earth, Pope: One lung and 9 more less-known, unusual facts about Pope Francis

## 2. Losing one lung

When Pope Francis was a teenager, he had a lung removed as a result of a respiratory illness and lung infection. According to lung expert Dr. Zab Mosenifar from Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, "Without seeing and testing him, I would comfortably say he functions at 85 to 90 percent capacity of someone his age that has both lungs and hasn't taken such good care of himself." Dr. Mosenifar also mentioned that Pope Francis lost his lung most likely more than fifty years ago when lung infections were treated via surgical removal instead of antibiotics.

## 3. A master's degree in chemistry

After studying chemistry at the University of Buenos Aires, Pope Francis received a master's degree in chemistry. According to a Catholic Herald report, Pope Francis "studied

liberal arts in Santiago, Chile, and in 1960 earned a degree in philosophy from the Catholic University of Buenos Aires. Between 1964 and 1965 he was a teacher of literature and psychology at Inmaculada high school in the province of Santa Fe, and in 1966 he taught the same courses at the prestigious Colegio del Salvador in Buenos Aires."

## 4. The Road Less Traveled

Pope Francis entered the Society of Jesus on March 11, 1958, but was not ordained priest until Dec. 13, 1969, because of his years of studies and pursuit of a variety of interests in philosophy, literature, and teaching. He was already 32. Despite his late start, however, Pope Francis was leading the local Jesuit community within four years, holding the top post from 1973 to 1979. Pope Francis' life and focus as a Jesuit and as a unique individual continued despite being promoted to higher positions.

Even after Pope Francis was appointed auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires, he remained humble and spent his time caring for the Catholic university, counseling priests and preaching and hearing



confessions; tasks that are not usually performed by “superiors.”

“On June 3, 1997, he was named coadjutor archbishop. He was installed as the new archbishop of Buenos Aires Feb. 28, 1998.”

### **5. Simple apartment, cooks his own meal, rides the bus**

Becoming the new archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1998 did not change who Pope Francis was as an individual. He rode the bus, visited the poor, lived in a simple apartment, and cooked his own meals.

Even in Rome, Pope Francis did not live in the archbishop palace but lived in an apartment where he continued to cook his own meals. Besides his low-key lifestyle, Pope Francis was part of a larger social entity by creating new parishes, restructuring administrative offices, and starting new pastoral programs such as a commission for divorcees.

### **6. The defender of the family who “washed and kissed the feet of Aids patients”**

Pope Francis is the author of books about spirituality and meditation and is the co-author of the book “Sobre el Cielo y la Tierra” (On Heaven and Earth) which is available on Kindle. While he is an outspoken person as a defender of the family and is against abortion and same-sex marriages, he is also the same human being who, in 2001, “washed and kissed the feet of Aids patients in a hospice” according to the Guardian.

### **7. Condoms “can be permissible”**

Unlike many officials in the Catholic church, Pope Francis believes that condoms “can be permissible” to prevent infection. Also unlike many other church members, Pope Francis has never lost his connection with ordinary people. On March 13, 2013, CBS New York wrote that, “He’s lived those 76 turbulent years on little buses and bikes and convents, in



dusty lanes all across Latin America. ... Bergoglio often rode the bus to work and regularly visited the slums that ring Argentina’s capital. He considers social outreach, rather than doctrinal battles, to be the essential business of the Church.”

### **8. Pope Francis practices what he preaches**

Talking about “social outreach” is easy, practicing “social outreach,” however, is part of the essence of Pope Francis from childhood until now. According to The Economist, Pope Francis told his fellow Argentinians “not to waste their money on plane tickets to Rome to see him created a cardinal by John Paul II in 2001, urging them to give it instead to the poor.”

### **9. The heart makes a man, not his clothes**

When Pope Francis came out onto the balcony on Wednesday as new Pope Francis, he came out in a white cassock instead of the traditional red cape and papal stroll. “He even chose to wear his own, simple cross — devoid of diamond and jewels — as he stood on the balcony taking in the incredible scene below.”

### **10. Expect the unexpected**

Even though Pope Francis was believed to have been the runner-up in the last papal conclave in 2005 that elected Pope Benedict XVI, hardly anybody expected Pope Francis to become the new pope in 2013. Not only because of Pope Francis’ age or because of his Jesuit background but also because of his “association with priests involved in liberation theology, a movement previously frowned upon by the Vatican.”

Expecting the unexpected appears to be a major theme in Pope Francis’ life. Who would have expected that a child from a railroad working family in Argentina who did not become a priest until he was 32 would become the leader of the Catholic church at the age of 76?

Pope Francis faces many challenges as the leader of the Catholic church. However, if anybody can bring upon much needed change, it is — unexpectedly — a pope with one lung.



# The Salesian's Filial Loyalty to Peter's Successor

Don Bosco showed filial loyalty to the Pope. This profound attitude is still alive today in the religious, consecrated and lay people who continue his charism and apostolic commitment to the Church and society. It is an attitude that is now renewed with the election of Pope Francis.

In the first article of Chapter 6 of the Italian edition of the 1875 Constitutions, Don Bosco wrote: *I soci riconosceranno per loro arbitro e superiore assoluto il Sommo Pontefice, cui saranno in ogni cosa, in ogni luogo e in ogni tempo umilmente e rispettosamente sottomessi* or, "The members will recognise the Supreme Pontiff as their absolute judge and superior. They will respectfully and humbly submit to him. This is a filial obedience, full of love and an obedience Don Bosco himself gave example of.

In the Salesian Constitutions renewed in 1984, there are two articles which make explicit reference to the successor of Peter: articles 13 and 125. "The Salesian Family Charter" also picks up the same direction and is pervaded by the filial loyalty to the Pope that characterised Don Bosco.

## Awareness of being Church.

Article 13 in the first part of the Constitutions describes a profile of the Salesian religious – it describes, as a basic attitude, the ecclesial identity of Salesian spirit and pastoral charity expressed in a renewed "ecclesial awareness"; of loyalty to the Pope, communion with the bishops and commitment to building up the local Church. The article says that the Salesian loves the Church, works for its growth, educates the young to love it. The reason for this love is based on the

fact that the Church was willed and loved by Christ.

Filial loyalty to the Successor of Peter is a Salesian characteristic. Don Bosco's life and tradition attest to that. "When the Pope expresses a wish in our regard, this is a command for us", "I feel really indignant", he wrote on one occasion, "at the scant regard certain writers have for the Pope... we have to cluster tightly around him...", the "fundamental purpose of the Congregation, right from the beginning, was to continuously support and defend the authority of the Supreme head of the Church in the less well-to-do classes of society and especially youth at risk". These are but some of the lines that indicate Don Bosco's complete dedication to the Church and the Pope.

For the Popes that he knew, Don Bosco was an extremely attentive servant. The Salesian loves the Pope and does not hide his love for him. He knows how to propose this love to the young and help them to be attentive to his teaching, in the certain knowledge that he is giving them a sure reference point in their search for truth.

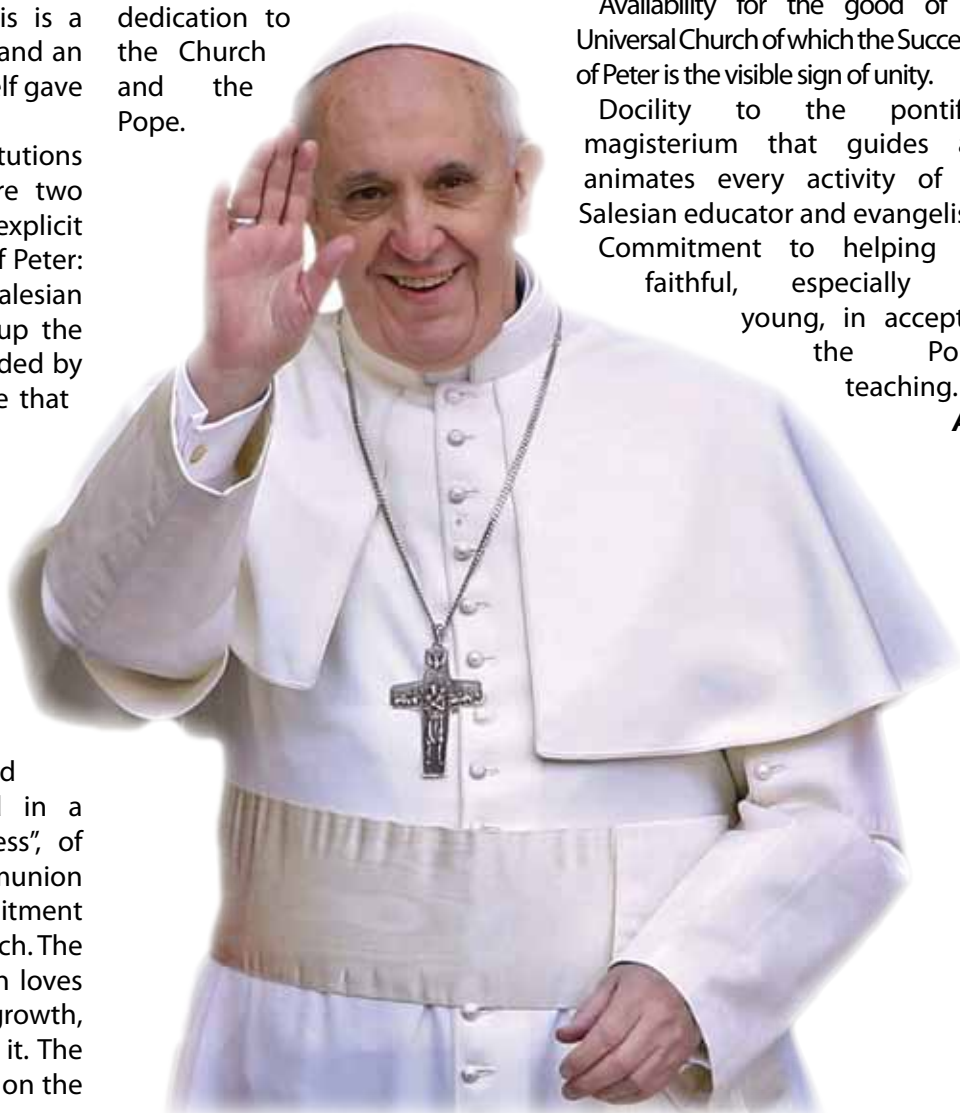
## The Supreme Pontiff is the highest superior of the Salesian Society

Article 125 in the fourth part of the Constitutions about the service of authority, recognises the Pope as the highest superior of the Congregation. It describes Salesian attitudes of filial loyalty to the Supreme Pontiff.

Availability for the good of the Universal Church of which the Successor of Peter is the visible sign of unity.

Obedience to the pontifical magisterium that guides and animates every activity of the Salesian educator and evangeliser; Commitment to helping the faithful, especially the young, in accepting the Pope's teaching.

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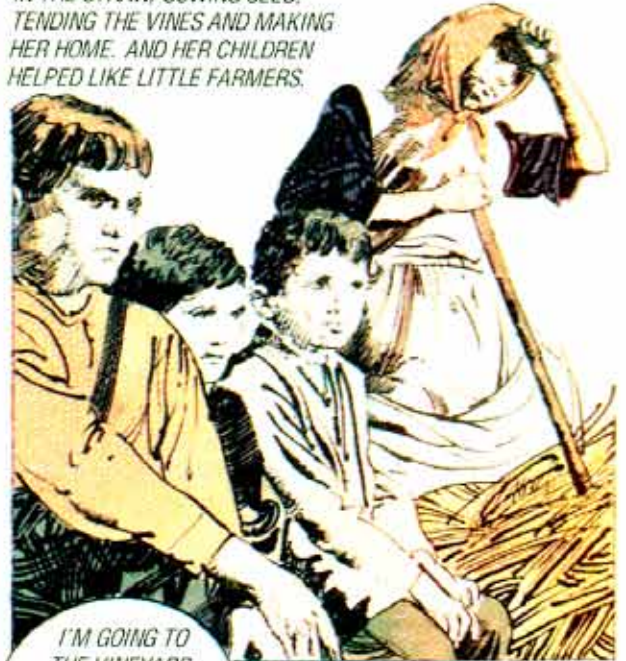
# A BOY WITH

*Continuation from the previous issue*



MARGARET BOSCO WAS JUST 29 WHEN SHE BECAME A WIDOW WITH THREE SONS: ANTHONY, JOSEPH AND JOHN.

SHE DIDN'T WASTE ANY TIME IN SELF-PITY: SHE JUST TUCKED UP HER SKIRT AND STARTED HOEING, DRAWING IN THE STRAW, SOWING SEED, TENDING THE VINES AND MAKING HER HOME. AND HER CHILDREN HELPED LIKE LITTLE FARMERS.



I'M GOING TO THE VINEYARD WITH TONY. WILL YOU TWO LOOK AFTER THE COWS?



SHE BROUGHT UP HER CHILDREN WITH LOVE AND FIRMNESS. ONE DAY...



JOHNNY LEFT THE CAGE OPEN AND WENT SOMEWHERE AND ALL THE RABBITS ESCAPED!!

WHAT A JOB TO GET THEM ALL BACK! AND NOW I'VE GOT TO FIND AND PUNISH THE CULPRIT...JOHNNY...

SEE THAT CANE? CAN YOU BRING IT HERE TO ME? I THINK I'LL NEED IT



I'M SORRY MUM, I WON'T DO IT AGAIN. SSSS



# A DREAM

## The Story of Don Bosco





# Pope Francis' Coat of Arms and Motto



On the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2013, the vigil of the Mass at which Pope Francis began his Petrine ministry, the Vatican Press Office presented his Coat of Arms and the motto he has chosen from St Bede "miserando atque eligendo".

## The Shield

Pope Francis has decided to keep the essential elements of his earlier coat of arms, chosen at the time of his episcopal consecration and essentially a simple one.

The blue shield is surmounted by the symbols of pontifical dignity, the same as the one used by his predecessor, Benedict XVI (mitre and between keys in gold and silver, with a red cord). Standing out above is the emblem of the Pope's Order, the Jesuits or Company of Jesus: a flaming sun with letters in red, IHS, monogram of Christ. The letter H includes a cross; this has three nails in black immediately below it.

Below is a star and a grape-like plant (nardo). The star, according to ancient heraldic tradition, represents the Virgin Mary, mother of Christ and the Church; the other plant, which flowers like a lily, represents St Joseph, patron of the Universal Church. In Spanish iconographic tradition, St Joseph

carries what looks like a lily in his hands. By including these images on his shield, the Pope has understood how best to display his devotion to Our Lady and to St Joseph.

## The Motto

The Holy Father, Francis' motto comes from a homily by the Venerable Bede, a priest (Om. 21; CCL 122, 149-151), commenting on the Gospel passage of St Matthew's call, where he writes "Vidit ergo Iesus publicanum et quia miserando

atque eligendo vidit, ait illi Sequere me" (Jesus saw a publican, looked upon him with love and feeling and said to him: follow me).

The homily is a tribute to Divine Mercy and can be found in the Liturgy of the Hours for St Matthew's feast day. It takes on a special role in the spiritual life of the Pope. It was on St Matthew's Feast in 1953, that the young Jorge Mario Bergoglio experienced, when he was but 17, the special loving presence of God in his life. Following confession, he felt his heart touched by God's mercy, and that God was looking at him lovingly, calling him to religious life, following the example of St Ignatius of Loyola.

When chosen as a Bishop, Bishop Bergoglio recalled this moment of the beginning of his special consecration in the Church and decided to choose St Bede's expression as his motto and programme for life: "miserando atque eligendo" (he showed mercy on him and called him), which is now in the Papal Coat of Arms.

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# Message from the Superior General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to the Holy Father



Expressing the joy of the entire Institute at the election of the new Bishop of Rome, Mother Yvonne Reungoat, Superior General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians sent a message welcoming Pope Francis.

## *Your Holiness*

We come to you with great joy to express our warmest wishes for the mission you have been called to by the will of the Cardinals who took part in the Conclave: Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church and Bishop of Rome.

We are at the forefront in praying for the Pope and his high responsibilities, also because of the love for Peter's Successor that our Founder and Father, Saint John Bosco, passed on to the Salesian Family. Now that we can think of a Pope with a name and a face, our prayer is ever more keen.

The barque of Peter has a new Helmsman who has taken on the spiritual legacy of Benedict XVI, and

will guide the Church in our time, full of challenges but also full of opportunities and signs of hope.

In the name of all the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians across the five continents, I express our filial loyalty to your Magisterium as Pastor and Father of the Universal Church.

We wish to express our fidelity to the Pope also through a more authentic religious life, a life loyal to the Gospel and the Salesian charism:

these are sources that enliven it and give it vocational fruitfulness.

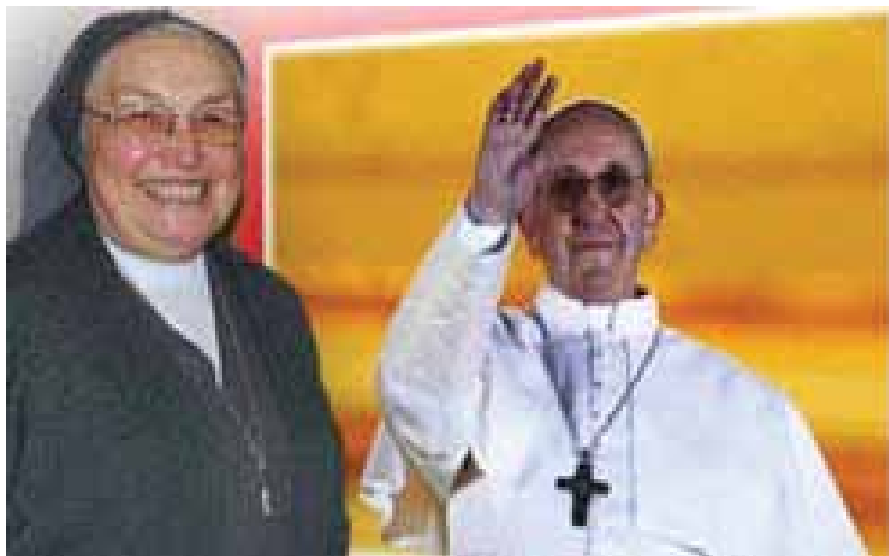
Along with the entire Church we express our commitment to New Evangelisation through the education of the youthful generations, by explicitly proclaiming Jesus.

We are convinced that only if we are his passionate disciples can we be missionaries of his love, knowing how to pass on, through our lives, the fascination of his presence that fills human existence with meaning, joy and peace.

We join you, Your Holiness, in greeting the Virgin with whom you intend to begin your Pontificate. May Mary Help of Christians continue to bless your life and make your new mission fruitful.

We offer our prayer, that in this Year of Faith your enlightened guidance may lead humanity to encounter Jesus.

**Sister Yvonne Reungoat, FMA  
ANS**



# A Few of the Pope's Favourite Things

Here are a few of Pope Francis' favourite things, which he revealed in a series of interviews granted while he was Archbishop of Buenos Aires.

The interviews are in the book, *Pope Francis: Conversations with Jorge Bergoglio by Sergio Rubin and Francesca Ambrogetti*, which was originally published in 2010 under the title *El Jesuita* (The Jesuit). It is not yet available in English.

**Favourite sports:** When he was young, the future Pope played basketball, but he loved going to the stadium to watch soccer with his whole family to see their favourite team, San Lorenzo. He lamented that the fan scene is not what it used to be. At the worst, "people would yell at the referee that he was a bum, a scoundrel, a sellout ... nothing in comparison to the epithets they use today," he said.

**Favourite city:** "I love where I live. I love Buenos Aires." He has travelled in Latin America and parts of Europe, including Ireland "to improve my English." However, he said, "I always try to avoid travelling ... because I'm a homebody" and got homesick easily.

**Favourite way to stay informed:** Newspapers. He said he turned on the radio only to listen to classical music. He had thought he'd probably start using the Internet like his predecessor, the late-Cardinal Juan Carlos Aramburu of Buenos Aires, did — "when he retired at 75."

**Favourite mode of transport as Cardinal Archbishop of Buenos Aires:** The subway, which he would always take to get around "because it's fast; but if I can, I prefer the bus because that way I can look outside."

**Favourite pastime:** As a boy, he liked to collect stamps. Today, "I really like reading and listening to music."

**Favourite authors and books:** "I adore poetry by (Friedrich) Holderlin," a 19th-century lyric

poet; Alessandro Manzoni's *The Betrothed* (*I Promessi Sposi*), which he said he has read at least four times; Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy*; and anything by Fyodor Dostoevsky and Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges. The Pope recalled that even though Borges was an agnostic, "he'd recite the 'Our Father' every evening because he had promised his mother he would, and died with a sense of 'religious comfort.'"

**Favourite music:** "Leonore" Overture No. 3 by Ludwig van Beethoven conducted by the late-Wilhelm Furtwangler, "who, in my opinion, is the best conductor of some of (Beethoven's) symphonies and works by Wagner."

**Favourite dance style:** tango, which he said he loves "very much. It's something that comes from within." He said he danced the tango when he was young "even though I preferred the milonga," which is an older form of tango with a faster rhythm.

**Favourite painting:** The White Crucifixion by Marc Chagall. The scene "isn't cruel, rather it's full of hope. It shows pain full of serenity. I think it's one of the most beautiful things Chagall ever painted."

**Favourite person:** His grandmother Rosa, who helped raise him when he was little, taught him his first words of Italian and passed on her deep religious sensibility.

**Favourite saint he turns to in time of need:** St. Therese of Lisieux. He kept a photo of her on his library shelf with a vase of white roses in front of it. "When I have a problem I ask the saint, not to solve it, but to take it in her hands and help me accept it."

**Favourite virtue:** "The virtue of love, to make room for others with a gentle approach. Meekness entices me enormously! I always ask God to grant me a meek heart," he said.

**Worst vice to avoid:** "The sin that repulses me most is pride" and

thinking of oneself as a big shot. He said when it has happened to him, "I have felt great embarrassment and I ask God for forgiveness because nobody has the right to behave like this."

**Typical reaction to unexpected announcements:** He freezes. When Pope Francis was elected Pope and appeared at the central balcony, many noticed he looked rather stiff. Turns out that's how he reacted when he was named auxiliary bishop in 1992 and how he reacts "to anything unexpected, good or bad, it's like I'm paralyzed," he said.

**Things he would rescue in event of a fire:** His breviary and appointment book, which also contains all of his contacts, addresses and telephone numbers. "It would be a real disaster to lose them."

"I'm very attached to my breviary; it's the first thing I open in the morning and the last thing I close when I go to sleep."

**He also keeps tucked safe between its pages his grandmother's letters and her last words to her grandkids before she died.** She said that in times of sadness, trouble or loss, to look to the tabernacle, "where the greatest and noblest martyr is kept," and to Mary at the foot of the cross so that they may "let fall a drop of salve on the deepest and most painful wounds."

CISA





# "Thank You For Everything"



The story is told about a woman Zen master named Sono who taught one very simple method of enlightenment. She advised everyone who came to her to adopt an affirmation to be said many times a day, under all conditions. The affirmation was, "Thank you for everything. I have no complaint whatsoever".

Many people from all areas of life came to Sono for healing. Some were emotionally distraught; others had financial troubles; some were seeking soul liberation. No matter what their distress or what question they asked her, her response was the same: "Thank you for everything. I have complaint whatsoever". Some people went away disappointed; others grew angry; others tried to

argue with her. Yet some people took her suggestion to heart and began to practice it. Tradition tells that everyone who practiced Sono's affirmation found peace and healing.

After reading this particular story, a kind of curiosity came to me. I began to say this affirmation many times a day. In the beginning I did it with curiosity but later it began to change my attitude. Yes, why do I complain at all? All what I am, is the gift of God and all what happens on my way comes from God. So now I began to say this affirmation from the heart, "Thank you for everything. I have no complaint whatsoever".

To my surprise, after a month on May 2nd 2011 at 11pm, I got a

message in my phone "kindly call me back". Usually no phone calls come in that particular place where I was working because it was an interior village.

Next day morning I called back the person who sent the message and it was my Superior General. I was surprised again. She told me that she is going to ask me an important question and to listen to her carefully. I got worried. Then she asked me "Are you ready to go to Sudan as a missionary?" She needed an answer in the evening. I kept down the phone. It was a very difficult situation but I remember, I said the same affirmation "Thank you for everything. I have no complaint whatsoever". It was rather difficult to give an answer

**The highest form of prayer is gratitude. Instead of asking God for things, start thanking God for the things and we will find that God has already given us everything that we need.**



but to my surprise again something prompted me and I called the Superior General and told her that I will go. And now I am in South Sudan having completed one year.

Yes, can you imagine what our life would be like if we simply dropped our complaints. It's a radical proposal, since most of us have been trained to question, analyse and criticize everything we see. But then sometimes we end up questioning, analysing and criticizing ourselves. Then we miss out the joy, the only true measure of success. But sometimes what happens to us is that there is a voice inside us objecting, "But if I did not complain, people would walk all over me". It is only our feeling. I am simply suggesting that we practice this affirmation for an entire thanksgiving Day. And then may be once a week. Then we might start to feel so good and our lives will become so effective that we would want to turn every day in to a Thanksgiving. I know it is always very easy to preach but to practice this in our own lives is difficult especially when we go through difficulties and problems. I have experienced it in my life. On 5th of October I was arrested and was in prison for 3 hours. It was a false accusation. Then onwards there

were lots of problems connected to it. It was not easy to thank God for that experience. But later I said thank you for everything. I have no complaint whatsoever. I could feel the difference in my attitude and I was able to forgive the persons who were behind this problem

The highest form of prayer is gratitude. Instead of asking God for things, start thanking God for the things and we will find that God has already given us everything

that we need. Life is a big treasure hunt. Eventually we grow weary of seeking treasures outside ourselves, and we begin to look within. There we discover that the gold we sought, we already are. Yes, let us begin to drop our complaints and thank God for everything. **"Thank you for everything. I have no complaint whatsoever".**

**Sr. Shanty Antony MSMHC (Don Bosco Mission , Tonj)**



# Pope Francis, Sports Aficionado and Devoted to Mary Help of Christians



While the entire world is looking for more information on the newly elected Pope, we offer one episode which shows his love for sport and, especially, his devotion to Mary Help of Christians.

In 2008, during a meeting, managers of San Lorenzo de Almagro football team gave the then Cardinal Bergoglio a San Lorenzo guernsey and a Season ticket to the club as a "Centenary member". For the occasion he also received a letter from the team's leadership inviting him to celebrate Mass for the 100 years of San Lorenzo Team.

Cardinal Bergoglio recalled the extraordinary San Lorenzo team which won the Championship in 1946, with players like Farro, Pontoni and Martino. At the centenary celebration he said that at San Lorenzo "we don't take our colours from just anywhere, but we ask the Virgin" and he also asked that "Mary Help of Christians never be separated from the Club because She is its mother, given that San Lorenzo began at the St Anthony's Oratory, under the Virgin Mary's protection".

ANS



# Journey to Holiness

Holiness is readiness to share with those who are in real need. It is readiness to ask for forgiveness when we do something wrong to others and readiness to forgive when someone does something wrong to us. It is the ability to say “no” when we ought to say “no” and “yes” when we ought to say “yes”. It is readiness to understand others as we desire to be understood by others. Holiness is to work when we work, to pray when we pray, to love when we love. It is to be who we are and where we are. It is to grow where we are planted. It is to be light in the darkness. It is to begin from where we are.

Many people, especially my youthful colleagues, prefer to do what they do not do. We work while eating; we drive while talking, we study while listening to music, pray while sleeping. Physically we are here but mentally we are there. Saint Paul says: “What I do, I do not understand. For I do not do what I want, but I do what I hate”. (Rom.7:15). Maybe it is because of the worldly complications which make us find it difficult to be or do what is expected of us. In any situation we can still grow in holiness if we have really fallen in love with what is good, if we ‘put out into deep water’. The difficulties and disappointments are there, but we are always called to keep close to Christ. Christ himself said “I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world”.

Who is perfect among us? No one is perfect except God. Therefore we are all imperfect, though in different ways. But this does not mean that we cannot be holy, because Christ himself, who is our model, tells us: “be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect” (Mt 9:50). Is he calling us to impossible things? I do not think so. I think he is calling us (God’s

children) to be like God who is our father. St. Augustine says; “My heart is restless, O Lord, until it rests in you”.

It is important to know that holiness of life is the journey of a life time. However we are, whatever way we are living or what we have is just an integral part of the whole of holiness. Each meal is enjoyable in itself at the moment without waiting for the next one. Likewise every step you make in your journey to town is complete in itself at the moment, is unique and can only reach where it was meant to reach, though you have not reached town yet. For one to be full when eating one has to take several spoons of food, but each spoon is worthwhile in itself at the moment and contributes to being satisfied at the end. I also think that for one to live the whole holiness, or attain the whole holiness, it depends on how one lives each integral part of the whole holiness. I am not talking about one to be perfect in whatever one thinks or does daily, but adding

something good to whatever one thinks and does daily, since holiness is something to be lived and not something to be acquired, studied or archived. Don Bosco told his boys that holiness consists in doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way. We also can grow in holiness if we really believe that God is at work through the ordinary good things which we think and do daily. We are all unholy but we are neither called nor destined to be unholy. Therefore for us to reach holiness it all depends on how much effort we make to minimize the space of the unholy and maximize the space of holiness.

Holiness is not a conquest made once for all but a life journey with its ups and downs or hidden and exposed moments in our life time. Life in holiness is like Christ’s journey to Calvary which was characterized by falling and rising and each time he fell and rose the closer he was to Calvary. Therefore, being a life time journey, we do not talk about reaching the peak of holiness while

**It is important to know that holiness of life is the journey of a life time. However we are, whatever way we are living or what we have is just an integral part of the whole of holiness.**



we are alive but growing closer and closer to holiness while we are alive.

We can say that we are growing in holiness when we use our mind to think what is good, when we use our hands to do what is good, when we use our eyes to see what is good, when we use our mouths to speak what is good, and when we open our hearts to love what is good. Fr. Peter Ricaldone said that holiness is to think well of all, to speak well of all, and to do good to all. For us to reach our strength we need to go beyond our weakness. Many people would like to be holy but they do not like to focus

on what is beyond the unholy. We forget that whenever we choose there are things to take and things to leave. A student who wants to be a scientist is advised to focus and work hard on science subjects rather than arts subjects. Therefore I also believe that for us to be holy we need to focus all our attention and effort on what is holy.

***Novice Fabian Mallya John***



## Talk the Walk and Walk the Talk.



I have been wondering why do we study, analyze and recommend yet we never put them into action to yield favorable results. It's with sincerity that I have learnt; an idea no matter how wonderful and life changing it might be, will remain just a thought until acted on.

It's been noted that cemeteries are full of original and marvelous, life improving thoughts, which never saw the light of the day. If one does the same thing, the same way and expects a different result, then this can be considered as measure of insanity. However, with current exposure to technological advancements especially in communication, it has elicited excitement and many have turned retardant and unproductive.

For instance, essay writing in schools are full of grammatical errors yet the older folks strived in this area despite challenges. Meanwhile, many people have seemingly fabulous ideas on paper but these are gathering dust on shelves. However, when these original ideas gain access to determined people, they act as tickets to fly over into suburbs from slums both economically, socially and spiritually.

It's worth noting that Christian teachings demonstrate the need to co-exist as parts of the same body, living in peace, love and unity. The question that arises therefore is, why does a vice such as theft, murder, suicidal tendencies, hopelessness, cut throat competitions and selfishness, strike us and our siblings? Consequently, greed, corruptions and individualistic attitude had been blamed. Did you know that more than 75% of Kenya's and East Africa's and world's populace is Christian?

If all Christians simply loved each other and embraced a brothers' keeper approach, can we not eliminate these vices for good and live a simple, serene, selfless yet happier life?

While listening to God's minister recently, an enormous challenge was posed to us, the attendees: whereas everyone is in the political campaign mood and praying for a peaceful- violence free- election process, what am I doing to grow peace in my own life, my family and eventually my country?

Therefore, it seems easier to point fingers, put marvelous recommendations on paper but the real enemy lives within you. The positive change you would like to experience starts with you on a single, decisive step put into action, for the greater good of mankind tomorrow. I do not want to be a product of my environment but rather, my environment to be a product of me. Has it ever crossed your mind that the present would not have been as it is, were it not for our fore-fathers' selfless actions at their own level?

Finally, let's not only think, talk and write way forwards on issues but in addition, put an action- step to its realization. Paul (converted Saul), witnesses to us that faith as small as a mustard seed, can move a mountain yet without action, it is dead.



# OUR NEW PRIEST

## Fr. Benn Agunga

Fr. Benn Agunga son of the late Charles Basil Agunga and Caren Veronica was born in a family of eight. Two brothers; Alfred (Agunga and Company, Malindi), Collins Agunga (Mt. Kenya University, Mombasa), and five sisters that is, Roseline Agunga (Kenya Methodist University, Mombasa), Eliza Agunga (Kilifi, Kenya), Celestine Agunga (Kenyatta University, Mombasa) and Brenda Agunga (Nairobi University, Mombasa).

Fr. Benn skipped nursery school and started his primary education at Kileleshwa Primary School, Nairobi joining Standard One in the year 1987. In 1991, he moved to St. Lazarus Primary School where he sat for his K.C.P.E.

Having admired the priesthood vocation and through the advice of his late mum Veronica, Fr. Benn went for an interview in the year 1995 with an intention of joining a minor seminary. In the year 1996, Fr. Benn was admitted in Form One



at St. Gabriel's Minor Seminary. Having successfully completed his KCSE in 1999, Fr. Ben decided to pursue his priestly vocation in the Salesian Congregation. In 2001, he attended the "come and See" vocation camp organized by Fr. George Kocholickal, SDB at Don Bosco YES, Karen (where he is currently assigned). He officially started his Aspirancy and Pre-Novitiate formation at Bosco Boys, Kuwindia. In 2003 Fr. Benn went for his Novitiate in Don Bosco, Moshi Tanzania. In the year 2004, Fr. Benn began his Bachelor Degree in Philosophy and Education in Don Bosco College, Moshi, Tanzania. He graduated at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa in 2007.

Fr. Benn then later went for his Practical Training (Pastoral experience) at Don Bosco Secondary School, Shinyanga, Tanzania until the year 2009. In August 2009, he started his Theological Formation at Don Bosco Utume, Nairobi. He pursued his Bachelor Degree in Theology at Tangaza University

College affiliated to Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA). During that period, Fr. Benn was ordained a Deacon at Don Bosco Upperhill, Nairobi on 12th May 2012. He successfully completed his Theological studies in January 2013.

Benn was ordained a Catholic priest on 25th April 2013 at Tumsifu Centre, Milimani, Kisumu by His Grace, Zaccheus Okoth, the Archbishop of the Arch diocese of Kisumu.

Fr. Benn is a fan of sports especially volleyball, debate, drama, teaching (education), journalism, a good organizer and above all he loves politics having been brought up in a political background. If you happen to ask Fr. Benn what he would have been if he was not a priest, he would cheerfully tell you "I would have been a lawyer or a media personnel.

Congrats Fr. Benn and above all THE AGUNGA'S Family for giving us a priest.



# Mary Help Of Christians

## Definitions:

The title of Mary Help of Christians is associated with the defense of Christian Europe (Latin and Greek), North Africa and the Middle East from non-Christian peoples during the Middle Ages. In 1572 the Ottoman Empire intended to invade Christian Europe. Pope Pius V called Christian armies from all over Europe to defend the continent and asked believers to pray to Mary in order to help the Christians. The defeat of the Muslim Turks was attributed to the intercession of Mary under such title.

## Geographical /Regional usage:

Given the specific reference to 'Christians', and given also the familiar reference to the briefer 'Ausiliatrice' in other European languages, many Salesians in countries where Christianity is in a minority, or where there might be other particular difficulties, refer to 'Mary our Help' or something similar.

The Feast of Mary Help of Christians is celebrated on May 24. The tradition of this advocacy goes back to 1571, when the whole of Christendom was saved by Mary Help of Christians when Catholics throughout Europe prayed the Rosary. The great battle of Lepanto occurred on October 7th 1571. For this reason this date has been chosen as the feast of the Holy Rosary. In 1573 Pope Pius V instituted the feast in thanksgiving for the decisive victory of Christianity over Islamism.

Near the end of the 17th century, Emperor Leopold I of Austria took refuge in the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians at Pasau, when 200,000

Ottoman Turks besieged the capital city of Vienna, but a great victory occurred thanks to Mary Help of Christians: on September 8th, Feast of Our Lady's Birthday, plans were drawn for the battle. On September 12, Feast of the Holy Name of Mary, Vienna was finally freed through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians. All Europe had joined with the Emperor crying out "Mary, Help!" and praying the Holy rosary.

In 1809, Napoleon's men entered the Vatican, arrested Pius

## Description

Don Bosco's personal devotion to Mary transcended all titles, both the traditional historical titles and titles tied to local popular shrines. It was solidly founded on the Church's traditional Mariology (Mother of God/Christ, *Theotokos*) and on traditional popular devotion as simply Our Lady (the Madonna). His devotion to Mary under particular titles, including Immaculate Conception and Help of Christians, appears as an aspect of his perception of Mary's basic presence in the church.

However, his devotion to and use of the term 'Help of Christians' came later - after 1860. Neither in his History of the Church (1st ed. 1845) nor in his History of Italy (1st ed. 1866/6) is there any mention of the Help of Christians. The inscription on the frieze inside the great church he saw in his dream in 1844 read "Hic domus mea, inde gloria mea", not "Auxilium Christianorum". Nor is the title in the early editions of the Companion of Youth (1st ed. 1847). It would seem

that it was the apparition and miraculous events of Spoleto 1862 that precipitated his interest and use of the term. Archbishop Arnaldi of Spoleto officially bestowed the title *Auxilium Christianorum* on the apparition. Don Bosco's narration of his dream of the Two Columns (May 30 1862) seems clearly connected with the event - one of this, along the columns bears the inscription 'Help of Christians'. With Spoleto, was tied to political, revolutionary and anticlerical events in Italy. In 1868 Don Bosco indicated that there was "a very special reason why the Church in recent times wished to invoke Mary as Help of Christians".



VII and brought him in chains to Grenoble, and eventually Fontainebleau. His imprisonment lasted five years. The Holy Father vowed to God that, if he were restored to the Roman See, he would institute a special feast in honor of Mary. Military reverses forced Napoleon to release the Pope, and on May 24th 1814, Pius VII returned in triumph to Rome. Twelve months later, the Pope decreed that the feast of Mary Help of Christians, be kept on the 24th of May.



**Q: What was Saint John Bosco's dream about Mary and the Eucharist?**

A: John Bosco, or known more popularly by his Italian heritage, Don Bosco, educator of youth and founder of the Salesians, had a dream in 1862 during which he perceived that two pillars in the storm tossed sea would anchor the boat of Peter (the Church). The tallest, strongest pillar was the Eucharist and second was the Blessed Virgin Mary. Don Bosco taught that tranquility would not return to the stormy seas until the pope would succeed in anchoring the Church between the pillars of Eucharistic devotion and devotion to Mary. Don Bosco described this dream many times to his students, and in a letter dated February 13, 1863 he wrote to Pope Pius IX about the dream. The pillar surmounted

with the host had the inscription, "The Salvation of Believers." The smaller pillar had a statue of Mary at the top of its column and the inscription, "Help of Christians."

Don Bosco fostered devotion to Mary under the title, Mary Help of Christians (*Auxilium Christianorum*). In 1863 he began the construction of a large church he gave the name, Church of Mary Help of Christians. It was completed in 1868. A biographer wrote:

To make Mary loved, to make her known in all her prerogatives, in all her glories, in all the graces she has conferred upon mankind and the Church—to make Mary known, in short, under the title of Mary Help of Christians, became Don Bosco's particular Marian mission. In Turin itself the faithful were quick to refer to Our Lady Help of Christians as "Don Bosco's Madonna." [Source:

Edna Beyer Phelan, *Don Bosco, A Spiritual Portrait*, New York: Doubleday, 1963, pp 244-5.]

**Context (examples of use):**

"When I submitted the plans for the church for the city's approval, the superintendent rejected the plans because of the title Help of Christians. 'It's too Jesuitical', he complained. 'But Sir,' I explained, 'perhaps in your line of work you have not had occasion of looking into the historical origin of this title. It commemorates the victories won by a coalition of Italian, Spanish and others against the Turks....'" (Barberis, Autograph Chronicle, June 26, 1875, Notebook II, 23-24, FDB C1-2)

## Pope Francis and the Salesians



As the days pass, new episodes and aspects of interest regarding Pope Francis emerge. Amongst them, a number tied in with the Salesian world. As well as his special devotion to Mary Help of Christians – displayed every 24th of the month at the Marian shrine at Almagro in Buenos Aires – there are others. The new Pope is also a Salesian past pupil.

In 1949 Jorge Mario Bergoglio attended "Wilfrid Barón" Salesian College in Ramos Mejía, along with

his brother. Jorge was in class 6B. From the list of prize-winners that year we see he got the first prize for conduct, religion and the Gospel.

A detailed biography published by the Argentine Daily "*La Nación*", also reports that the Pope, when he was 17 had Fr Enrico Pozzoli as his spiritual director, from the Almagro community. This priest, before bringing Don Bosco's charism to Tierra del Fuego – the ends of the world – left an indelible mark on him. It was Fr Pozzoli who suggested to the young Bergoglio to go to the Tandil mountains to overcome an attack of pneumonia; it was he who helped the future Pope apply for the seminary at Villa Devoto; and Card. Bergoglio included a reference to him in the preface to his first book – *Meditations for Religious* – referring to the "strong impact" this Salesian had on his life, and the "example of ecclesial

service and religious consecration" he gave.

At Tandil, when he was 18 years, Bergoglio met Roberto Musante, two years older than him, who he then met in more complex circumstances later. Like when Bergoglio, during the dictatorship, took in three seminarians belonging to Bishop Enrique Angelelli.

At Tandil, Fr Musante recalls, the two got to know each other and talk, and Bergoglio "was rather quiet and humble". The two young men then took different paths. Today, Fr Musante, a Salesian, works in Angola where he looks after hundreds of youngsters at Lixeira, "rubbish dump" in Portuguese. Bergoglio, instead, chose to follow St Ignatius Loyola.

ANS

# Rooted in Good Soil!! VIDES Growth in the World



"We are small dwarfs on the shoulders of two giants" these words were said by our dear Mother General Sr. Yvonne Reungoat at the 10<sup>th</sup> international VIDES Convention in Trevi- Italy. The two giants are none other than St. John Bosco and St. Mary Mazzarello. Before the term Volunteering came, John Bosco and Maria Mazzarello were doing it. Think of the Typhoid outbreak in Mornese and the big heart of Maria who went to assist those who were suffering. Think of Don Bosco even as a young boy giving his time to teach the other boys in the village to pray and play well. In his time as a priest, the boys in the oratory were launched to volunteerism during the cholera epidemic in Turin. Shielded by the blessing of Mary Help of Christians the boys courageously and safely assisted the sick. Among the first collaborators of Don Bosco were many volunteers from all walks of life.

Today the same Spirit of generosity is alive. Year 2012 was so significant to the VIDES Volunteers in the world. It was the silver jubilee of the association at the world level. Following St. John Bosco and St. Mary Mazzarello's charism in 1987, Mother General, at that time Mother Marinella Castagno, and the General Council together with the

dynamic and entrepreneurial vision of Sr. Maria Grazia Caputo, saw VIDES born as a natural expression of the FMA charism.

Since then, VIDES has expanded its horizons and at the moment it is present in 4 continents, 41 countries and 53 Vides groups. VIDES Kenya is one of the VIDES groups. In Africa, VIDES is in Kenya, Congo D.R.C and now newly born Congo Brazzaville.

The celebration of 25 years coincided with the 10<sup>th</sup> International VIDES Congress. The main theme was: Recall, Rejoice, Renew. It was a time to recall the journey made in the past 25 years, to rejoice for what VIDES has done in the world and to renew the commitment for the next 25 years and beyond. I had the chance of participating in this great event together with Bernard the VIDES Kenya Chairman. It was an exciting as well as rich experience as VIDES International gathered together from all the mentioned countries.

The presence of our Rector Major Don Pascual Chavez and Mother General Sr. Yvonne Reungoat, brought warmth and a clear indication that VIDES is a welcomed Association in the Salesian Family and there is no fear to venture ahead with great hopes. VIDES hopes must grow daily.

Mother General clearly confessed that she was happily surprised each time she heard the stories of many Volunteers and the great experiences they had in Volunteering. These are not extraordinary people, they are our young people who became part of VIDES and chose to go whether to a place only next door or far away to serve their fellow young. She sees a great future in VIDES as a sure way of new evangelization. VIDES is a special gift to the FMA institute. She kept on repeating these sentiments the whole time she was with us.

The Rector Major Don Pascual Chavez gave strength to what VIDES has done since the beginning and highlighting his proposed strenna for 2013, said that VIDES is one great channel in proposing a Gospel of joy to the young. The volunteers are doing it already and ought to continue with renewed energy.

My wish is to see VIDES reaching to all the other countries of Africa and the world at large since it came at the right time. Long live VIDES!

**Sr. Laurenzia FMA**  
**VIDES KENYA Formation**  
**Delegate**



# Tallest ever statue of John Paul II unveiled in Poland

## Vatican City:

The world's tallest statue of Pope John Paul II was inaugurated today in Czestochowa, southern Poland. The city of Czestochowa is a popular destination for Catholic pilgrims who go there to pray before the black Madonna painting.

"The statue weighs 10 tons and is 13,8 metres tall. It's bigger than the one in China which is 12 metres tall," Leszek Lyson, the man who funded the project and owns a fun park on the outskirts of Czestochowa.

During the inauguration ceremony, the statue was blessed by the Archbishop of Czestochowa, Monsignor Wacław Depo. Paradoxically, the tallest statue of John Paul II has been erected in a park which is also home to some sacred architecture miniatures, including a miniature of the Lourdes and Fatima shrines.



*UCAN, India*

## Vatican holds Major Conference on faith in Asia

Asia's rapid growth and increasing inequality is resulting in a weakening of spiritual life and posing a challenge which Asia's many faiths could and should face together, Cardinal Fernando Filoni said at the end of a major Vatican conference this week.



it is aimed at developing policies and strategies for the common good... promoting a culture of empathy and compassion."

The conference was aimed at drawing up a blueprint for Catholic missionary action in Asia and included representatives of faiths including Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism as well as experts from Italy, the Vatican and 10 different countries in the Asian region.

Held at the Pontifical Urbaniana University which trains priests from mission areas, the conference on the Asian Church and its future ended on Wednesday with a call for all religions to face these challenges together with a common sense of "authenticity" and "purpose."

Cardinal Filoni said that while economic growth had "increased the material means available" to Asians, this progress has not been followed with an equal distribution of goods.

"Inhuman and scandalous forms of poverty and exclusion [still exist]," he said.

Affluence has also meant problems for spirituality including immorality, lack of attention to human life and suicides, added the cardinal.

In a strong statement on interfaith collaboration, Cardinal Filoni said that dialogue between different religions in Asia had a "social and political color since

*UCAN*



# The Future of the Congregation Depends on the Quality of Formation: The Rector Major's New Letter

Just as we were celebrating Easter, the Rector Major gave the Congregation a new circular letter. "Vocation and formation: gift and task". It aims at illustrating the beauty and the demands of the Salesian vocation and formation, and at the same time shows the current situation of vocational inconsistency. The letter is in two basic parts.

## Consistency and vocational fidelity

The Rector Major highlights the need to help young confreres achieve vocational consistency, and help those who have already made a definitive choice to live their vocation faithfully. Weakness of vocation is particularly evident in the statistics which the Rector Major wants to make known to the entire Congregation so people can be aware of the problems and then help by taking on responsibility.

There are two complementary aspects noted, basic causes of a lack of consistency and fidelity:

a wrong idea of vocation; this is sometimes identified with a personal project motivated by the need for self-realisation. Often there are weak or insufficient motivations for beginning the journey in Salesian consecrated life, and sometimes a lack of conscious awareness; if motivations are ignored, fragility or infidelity are more likely to result.

The culture we live in presents opportunities but also risks. An anthropological understanding is a resource, but also a challenge for the vocational journey. There

is a need for authenticity, sense of freedom, history, constant seeking for experiences, appreciation of relationships and affectivity, difficulties in renouncing things and remaining faithful – all these in a postmodern and multicultural context. These anthropological aspects while challenging are essential for a consecrated life that desires to be fully human and therefore credible.

## Vocation formation

Vocation is the foundation for the journey of formation and formation is there to serve the full development of vocation. They are both gift and task.

Each individual's life is a vocation; therefore life is a response to God's call. Vocation is not principally a human project but God's plan for each one: it is a plan to recognise, accept and live. The discovery of one's vocation is at the origins of realising our individual lives; it takes a lifetime to live a vocation. It is a call to a mission entrusted to us by God; there is no vocation without mission. This is why mission, with vocation, gives form and content to formation.

Formation is a constant process of identification with the vocation received. This is why the letter presents the identity of the Salesian consecrated vocation and its formation approaches to ensure the process of identification. Acquiring identity is the aim of formation.

Fr Chávez once again proposes, as objectives, the fundamental elements of Salesian vocational identity: sent to the young (being

conformed to Christ the Good Shepherd); brothers in a single mission (common life as the place and object of formation); consecrated by God (witnessing to the radical nature of the Gospel); sharing of life and mission (animating apostolic communities in the spirit of Don Bosco); at the heart of the Church (building it up); being open to real circumstances to realise the charism.

To ensure we acquire identity and fostering the process of vocational identity, the Rector Major reminds us that the "Ratio" offers specific approaches that we need to adopt with more awareness and commitment. It is a case of reaching into the depths of the individual, animating an experience, unity of formation, ensuring a climate of formation and everyone shared responsibility, giving quality formation to daily experience, qualifying our accompaniment, paying attention to discernment.

At the end of the letter the Rector Major makes an appeal that formation, initial and ongoing, be an "absolutely vital priority in the Congregation" and he turns to Mary asking her to accompany us as she did from the beginning and throughout Salesian history.

The Rector Major's Letter, no. 416, is, apart from the Strenna 2014 commentary to come, the last thematic letter in Fr Chávez's mandate.

The complete text is available online at [sdb.org](http://sdb.org).

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**Pope Francis**