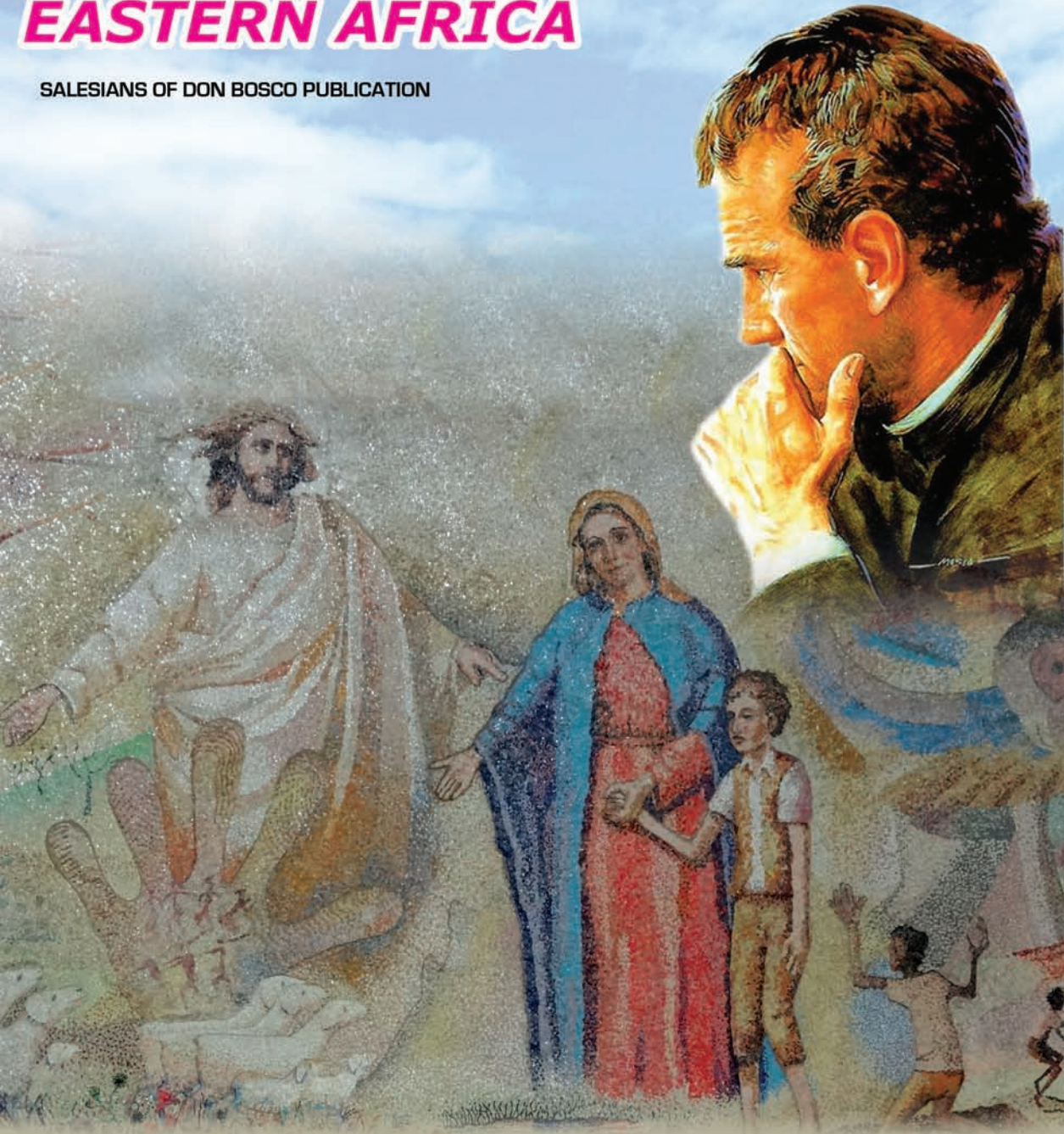


DON BOSCO **EASTERN AFRICA**

SALESIAN FAMILY BULLETIN
1ST QUARTER, FEBRUARY 2015

SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO PUBLICATION



200 years, and the Dream lives on...

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From the EDITOR

200 years, and the Dream lives on....

Don Bosco was from a very poor background, he was a semi-orphan. He knew what it meant to be hungry, what it meant to go to school quite late in life because his mother could not afford it. He knew how to depend on others to achieve his goal. All these helped him to understand, later in life, the poor boys who ran to him seeking help.

He was a dreamer. When he was nine years old he had a dream. It made such a profound impression on his life that its effects accompanied him throughout the rest of his life. In that dream he witnessed boys fighting and swearing at each other. Being a good boy brought up by his mother in a Christian, God-fearing way he could not stand the behaviour of those boys. He used force to let them know that their behaviour is not acceptable. At that moment Jesus appeared to him, “you will not win these boys over with blows, but with kindness”. He was given Mary as his guide. He made that dream a reality and Mary was with him throughout his life. Most of his projects later in life, were guided by dreams and the presence of Mary who accompanied him.

Thousands of people who are inspired by this man continue living his dream today. This exceptional man, this modern saint brought in a totally new thinking to the institution bound priesthood of his days. He went out of his way against the wishes of his fellow priests and the promise of a comfortable life because he knew that if these youngsters are neglected, it is like the world being neglected. He took up the challenge and today we have a vast movement called Salesians. There are 30 member groups of the Salesian family and millions touched by his system of education.

In the last month I have heard on BBC two features on Salesians doing heroic work. It was something that would make any lover of Don Bosco feel proud, a secular news channel like BBC glorifying the efforts made by these members of the Salesian family. The first one was the hard work put in by the Don Bosco orphanage in Sierra Leone caring for the children orphaned by Ebola. For the hundreds of children orphaned by this deadly disease, Don Bosco Orphanage became their home. Like Don Bosco at that time, the Don Bosco priests, Brothers and volunteers became everything for those children. The second case was from Manila Philippines. A Salesian priest who is known as Fr. Rocky tirelessly working for the street children of Manila suburb. In a dangerous neighbourhood where crime and prostitution has become a way of life Fr. Rocky has become another Don Bosco. In a rather lengthy interview he told BBC what inspired him and what his plans are for the youngsters who are considered the unwanted people of that city. Truly inspiring and encouraging. The celebration of the 200th birthday of this great man is challenging for all those who imitate, follow and love this extraordinary human being, to take up the challenge of showing a way for the many youth of today who lack heroes to look up to, whose heroes are the celebrities who often do not give any moral credibility. The challenge is to be Don Boscoss to the youth who are often led astray by wrong ideologies.

Sebastian Koladiyil

The Message of the Rector Major

The Rector Major is the superior general of the Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB) a Catholic religious society focused on holistic formation of young people all over the world. The present superior is Ángel Fernández Artime who is originally from Spain. On March 25, 2014, he was elected by the General Chapter 27 as the new Rector Major and the 10th Successor of Don Bosco. He represents Don Bosco today for this large congregation. Every month he writes a letter to all the members on the Salesian congregation as part of animation. Given below are the two letters he recently wrote.

THE WONDERFUL HUMAN AND RELIGIOUS QUALITY WE CALL “GRATITUDE”

“Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father” (Eph 5:19-20).

Not only in psaltery but for our whole life, the feeling and expression of thanks to God come out in many ways and with various tones. 2015, the year of Don Bosco’s bicentennial, has set in motion a broad pastoral program in every country, but it has inaugurated especially a time of thankfulness.

Appreciation and wonder for all that the Lord has given us in these 200 fruitful years calls for a lifestyle, an attitude, that nurtures fruitfulness, namely gratitude. Yes, the celebrations of the jubilee year that are multiplying all over the world inevitably stir up thanks, which, like every virtue, must be learned and exercised. It’s a duty for life. Let me propose three concrete ways of living gratefully.

Knowing how to contemplate

To give thanks, in the first place it’s necessary to know how to contemplate; we must be able to devote our attention to the history of our Salesian Family. In the 200 years since Don Bosco’s birth we’ve known ourselves to be loved unconditionally. And since gratitude is



nurtured by humility, we have to make time for authentic apostolic motivations to mature in us, lest our motivations lead us astray, cause us to burn out, or have us rushing about endlessly or uselessly. Rather, we have to know how to be open to God’s grace.

In the whirlwind of the many initiatives and activities with which we’ll celebrate the bicentennial of the birth of our Father Don Bosco, we must make time for our interior life, make noise-free “open spaces,” so as to entrust ourselves to God’s Providence and respond freely. Swamped as we are every day by a thousand tasks, at times wrapped up in endless activity, our pastoral life invites us to be serious about giving generous time to let ourselves be surprised every day, to hope for God’s promises with the same attitude that we see in Don Bosco’s life. The first place that the bicentennial must touch is people’s hearts.

With divine energy

In the second place, let's remember how educational passion penetrated Don Bosco's life from beginning to end, from his first steps to his last, from his childhood till he was seventy-two. *There are no dead zones in a Salesian's life.* There are no parentheses in God's promise or in the generous response of the one who is called. The attitude of gratuitousness in our apostolic life springs from this conviction: we work for God and with God's power. The logic of the Gospel is that of grace (Rom 9:16; 1 Cor 4:7). Our vocations aren't gestures calculated according to some measure or quality of their own, but only according to the freely given gift of God's promise—a promise that can neither weaken nor fail. In the heart of the Salesian Family there are people of all ages in whom it's easy to perceive the signs of a life of commitment: their little tokens of attention, respect for the kids, and friendly presence reach a level of intensity equal to the power of Him whom they represent.

Bridge-builders

Finally, thankfulness opens our lives to originality, innovation, and freshness. It draws us close to the young, whom we love and who love us, forging bonds and consolidating *relationships that are profoundly unmerited and freely given.*

We live in a culture of merit whose strongest ally is narcissism. The “me” generation's creed is “I've earned it.” It's opposed to a culture of relationships as gifts, a culture of sincere and disinterested friendship. We've received a pastoral heritage from Don Bosco, whose pedagogical and charismatic wisdom is laid out for us not in studies, research, or weighty essays, but in his lived experience of spending a lot of quality time with the young. Gratitude is a rare commodity in the world of relationships. The new

edition of the *Salesian Youth Ministry: Frame of Reference*, presented at the Salesians' 27th General Chapter last year, invites us to “turn our house into a family for the young” (chapter V), and calls us to an animating presence that makes gratitude an instrument of our educational relationships.

The Holy Spirit raised up the Salesian charism in the Church, and as the heirs of this gift we're called to “build bridges” between two shores, between God and the young; to keep in regular contact with both the new generation and the Lord. Every young person is loved and is worthy of confidence on God's part. On this is based the friendly, fatherly presence that Don Bosco's educational genius expressed as sincere friendship and loving presence.

The young are our Promised Land. As the days go by on our journey, the young are the burning bush from which God calls us to be grateful. The best way to thank him for the gift of Don Bosco is to celebrate life. This duty isn't exhausted by liturgical prayer. Rather, it reaches to the whole of our daily life. When the heart overflows with gratitude, you have to celebrate. Celebration is the peak of thanks for the abundance of good that our Family has received in its history.

Don Bosco's voice has resounded beyond the Catholic Church. In every context it has touched like-minded hearts and built bridges of dialog with other religious cultures. We're happy especially because the young have welcomed Don Bosco's word enthusiastically. They're the ones who've taken hold of the evocative Salesian slogan that I wish to offer as a message to the young people of the world: “My dear young people, I love you with all my heart. It's enough for me that you are young for me to love you with all my soul.” Don Bosco said that to all his youngsters, and I ask this gift of our Father, Teacher, and Friend.



We're all Missionaries

Once again the Lord calls us by name, consecrates us, and sends us to be like his beloved Son Jesus Christ and to proclaim him.

I am inviting you and I ask you to be upright before God, to be servants without privileges, and always to carry out the will of the Father.

Don Bosco wanted to have congregations and institutes that were “outgoing.” We’re a Family that had a father with a heart so large and impassioned that it couldn’t stop dreaming, and so he’s given us many missionary dreams that still are our dreams today.

Valdocco, Mary Help of Christians, Missionary Expedition: this is a precious triad to be offered to humanity, especially to the young and the neediest of our global village, sharing the charism for which all of us are co-responsible. It’s a triad that makes us reach out to the very ends of the earth! In fact, our dear Don Bosco sent his sons and daughters all the way to far-off, almost unknown Tierra del Fuego, farther south even than scarcely explored Patagonia, a land of courageous peoples very much open to the transcendent and to love for the earth, for creation. That enterprise needed many sacrifices and much sweat from our sisters and brothers, and it helped give growth and development not only to the faith, but also to society and the culture of the countries of the region. Today we have a Pope who comes from there and who, in his audience with the 27th General Chapter, expressed to us this mandate-desire: “*Les pido, no me dejen the Patagonia!*” – “*I ask you, do not leave Patagonia!*”



I want to leave you three souvenirs, as Don Bosco did. The first is inspired by the prophet Ezekiel: **Be upright before God.**

To be upright means to be transparent, not to have two tongues or hidden intentions. We're called to be sincere, sometimes cunning in the Gospel sense that Jesus teaches us, but always men and women in

whom there is no falsehood, like Nathanael. To be upright means to be clear in our motives, to be able to speak the truth about ourselves to ourselves and others. One does not go on mission (whatever kind of mission, even that of Rector Major) if one is trying to find himself, if one is seeking power or looking to impose himself on others, if one profoundly believes that what he brings not only is of great value—it most certainly is that!—but that It's superior, better than what he'll find in others and in the places where he'll go. To be upright before God is to plunge completely into the heart of the merciful God, who loves sinners and always gives them another opportunity and is always disposed to receive them and embrace them as his dearly beloved children coming to him from a long way off.

To help us, Psalm 25 teaches us to pray with all our heart: *"Your ways, O Lord, make known to me; / teach me your paths, / Guide me in your truth and teach me..."* (vv. 4-5).



St. Paul's letter to the Philippians inspires my second phrase: **Be servants without privilege.**

The Apostle has left us one of the Christological hymns that we're sure the first Christians used in the liturgy. This hymn is also an act of faith: *"Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave..."* (2:6-7).

Dearest brothers and sisters, our most precious privilege is to be called to live like Jesus, who emptied himself and took on the condition of a slave! Each of us is, even if in different ways, a servant of others. Even here, the natural temptation to power is vitiated by the clear example and the sufferings of Jesus. We're called to put ourselves at the service of those to whom we're sent, to put ourselves at the service even of those who are indifferent, who reject us or fight against us. We're called to be wise and take care of ourselves, our communities, and our brothers and sisters ... but to be ready to give our whole life. To go on mission is to answer the call to give our own life until its last breath for our youngsters, as Don Bosco did for his. May it always be our privilege to serve those who are in most need, the young most in danger, and populations most impoverished.

Finally, we come to the third phrase that I want to share with you: **Carry out the will of the Father.**

To carry out the will of the Father is the only valid scope of our life as baptized and consecrated persons. There is no other. And the will of the Father isn't carried out by ourselves alone, autonomously, as if believing that we're a renewed version of the Redeemer. Never! Not one of us is called to be the Messiah! Not one of us is called to put aside community discernment, working together, dedicating ourselves shoulder to shoulder with other educator-pastors, and, without regard to distance, not be in a deep communion of soul and intentions, of prayer and affection.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord calls us and sends us to be missionary disciples who live not only the great commandment of Jesus to love another, but to turn into a reality the dream-desire of Jesus that he himself prayed for in his farewell: *"Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are"* (John 17:11).

To carry out the will of the Father is to witness to the world that we're capable of being brothers and sisters among ourselves and among all men and women of good will without regard to creed, faith, religion, or customs.

Once again the Lord calls us by name, consecrates us, and sends us to be like his beloved Son Jesus Christ and to proclaim him. I am inviting you and I ask you *to be upright before God, to be servants without privileges, and always to carry out the will of the Father.*

Only with the maternal and tender protection of Mary, Don Bosco's Teacher, and with her daily instruction, can we become authentic missionary disciples and help in such a way that *"every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* (Phil 4:11).



A Dream turns into Reality

The Story of a Dream

The Dream

When John had a dream at the age of nine his eldest brother thought he was crazy and some of the neighbours wrote him off as a dreamer. But his saintly mother had a hunch that probably God had designs for him. Her three boys went their separate ways but John the youngest decided he would become a priest and work for deprived and abandoned youth. He went through difficult and trying times but he was able to get human and divine interventions to help him reach his goal. Providence continued to play a significant part in his plans and ventures. Soon John, as a priest, took on the establishment and set up organizations to address the youth issue.

At a time, in the 19th Century, when religious movements and Christian organizations were under scrutiny and were being suppressed by secular authority, John, almost singlehandedly

organized groups and societies that would initiate and support educational and social ventures. He founded religious Orders for men and for women and other lay organizations that would support these initiatives.

John never forgot his roots. The loss of his father when he was only two years old, due to a severe bout of pneumonia, left a void that psychologists and sociologists believe propelled him into starting off the dynamic ventures and initiatives that made a difference to society. With no father-figure around he depended on his mother while growing up. She in turn watched over him and supported him even during his early days at the fledgling projects he started for young people. In fact she played a powerful role in shaping his personality and giving him a sense of direction.

The Dream shows promise

John was born in the evening of 16 August 1815 in the hillside hamlet of Becchi, in Piedmont, in northern



Italy. He was the youngest of the three boys of Francis and Margaret Bosco. Together with his elder brothers, Anthony and Joseph, John helped to run the farm of his father. John was brought up at a time of great shortages, following the devastation caused by the Napoleonic wars and the drought of 1817

In 1825, when he was nine, John had the first of a series of dreams which would play an influential role in his life. This dream left a profound and lasting impression on him. In the dream John saw a great number of very poor boys who were blaspheming as they played their games. Then a man appeared who was nobly attired, with a manly and imposing bearing. The man told him: *You will have to win these friends of yours not with blows, but with gentleness and kindness. So begin right now to show them that sin is ugly and virtue beautiful.*

Meanwhile when the travelling entertainers performed at local fairs in the nearby hills, John watched and studied the jugglers' tricks and the acrobats' secrets. He then put on performances of his own showing off skills as a juggler, magician and acrobat, however with prayers before and after each performance. That was the twist that made the difference. These were his early attempts to try and get his message across to the great army of young people he (and later his followers) would one day encounter through schools, colleges, youth centres and institutions.

The Dream has problems

John's family weren't by any means well off and Margaret struggled to provide for everyone. There was little she could do to get John through any schooling. John's early years were spent as a shepherd. He received his first



instructions in academic learning from a kind parish priest. His childhood experiences are thought to have inspired him to become a priest. He had winning ways and knew instinctively how to stop a fight and how to comfort some of his mates when they suffered in any way.

But, at that time, being a priest was generally seen as a profession for the privileged classes, rather than farmers, though there was the occasional surprise when a farmer's child achieved that position. Some of his neighbours and even some of his biographers portray his older brother Anthony as the main obstacle to John's ambition to study. Whenever John brought into the home a book to read or some little assignment his parish priest had given him Anthony would bully him out of developing any form of study habits. Anthony kept protesting that John was just a farmer like any of them and did not need any book to do his farming chores.

Margaret however kept tabs on the sensitivities and aspirations of her beloved John. She did her best to shield

him from the taunts of Anthony, her eldest son, and saved up her pennies to allow John to follow his aspirations. And so it all finally happened when, on a cold morning in February 1827, John left his home on an adventure that would lead him to new horizons. This was a small step but a significant one. He went to look for work as a farm-servant. At 12, he found life at home unbearable because of the continuous quarrels

enhance the learning that Cafasso had initiated. It is difficult to imagine but John's prolific hidden abilities enabled him to acquire quite an amount of specific and all-round knowledge. He also developed, with very little guidance, many of the 'soft skills' that employers require today. Equipped with all that training he was able to present himself as quite an accomplished young man, and was considered bright and qualified



with Anthony. Having to face life by himself at such a young age may have helped him develop his later sympathies to help abandoned boys. After begging unsuccessfully for work, John ended up employed by a wine farm owner.

However, John was not able to attend school for another two years. His first break-through came in 1830 when he met Joseph Cafasso, an elderly priest, who spotted the natural talent in John. He supported John's early efforts at learning. This in fact was the first schooling that John went through. He also had to use his own innate skills to

enough to enter the seminary. Life moved on and, after six years of study, he was ordained a Catholic priest in 1836 in Turin.

The Dream moves on

At that time the city of Turin was just a reflection of what industrialization and urbanization had done. Young and old flocked to the cities for work of any sort. Numerous needy families ended up in the slums of the city, leaving poor but fairly stable settings in the countryside in the hope of a better life in the cities. In visiting the prisons John

was disturbed to see among the inmates many 12 to 18-year-old boys. He was determined to find ways to prevent them ending up there. John found the traditional methods of parish ministry ineffective for this rapid increase of people migrating to the city. He decided to try another approach. He began to meet boys where they worked and gathered i.e. in shops, offices, market places. They were pavers, stone-cutters, masons, plasterers who came from far-away places

In addition to his search errands, he founded the 'Oratorio' (a modern-day 'Youth Centre', where educational nurturing leads young people towards healthy moral living and prayerful habits), as his main Sunday ministry. It was not however just a charitable institution, and its activities were not limited to Sundays. For John it became his permanent occupation. He looked for jobs for the unemployed young people who came to him. Some of these boys did not have any place to stay, and often slept under bridges or in bleak public dormitories. On two occasions he tried to provide lodgings in his own little house. The first time he tried that the boys stole the blankets. On the second occasion they emptied the hay-loft. But John did not give up.

In May 1847, John gave shelter to a young boy, in one of the three rooms he was renting in the slums of Valdocco, in Turin, where he was living with his mother. They then began taking in orphans. Before they could realize it the number of sheltered boys had grown from 36 in 1852 to nearly 800 in the late 1860s. John struggled to find a permanent home for his Oratorio. He was turned out of several places in succession. Some people even lodged complaints to the municipality because these street boys had not yet been

trained enough to behave properly all the time. But John was an optimist. He never gave up.

The Dream keeps growing

Some of the boys helped by John were inspired by him, and offered to do what he was doing. They began to help John in his work in the service of abandoned boys. They liked what he did and decided to team up with him wherever and whenever they could. This was the origin of the Salesian Society. Among the first members were Michael Rua, John Cagliero (who later became a Cardinal), and John Baptist Francesia.

John took heart from that and, in 1859, selected the experienced priest Vittorio Alasonatti, 15 seminarians and one high school boy and formed them into the 'Society of St. Francis de Sales.' This was the nucleus of the Salesian Society, the religious Order that would carry on his work. He chose Francis de Sales, the French saint, as his patron because he wanted his followers to imitate the kindness and gentleness of this Saint. The word 'Salesian' in fact comes from 'Sales'. When the group had their next meeting, they voted on the admission of Joseph Rossi as a lay member, the first Salesian Brother. The Salesian Society now consisted of priests, seminarians and Lay Brothers.

John then worked out a similar plan for women with a lady, Mary Mazzarello, in the hill town of Mornese, in Piedmont. In 1871, with her he founded a society of religious Sisters to do for girls what the Salesians were doing for boys. They were called the 'Daughters of Mary Help of Christians'.

The Dream crosses boundaries

When John founded the Salesian Society, the thought of setting up his



centres in 'foreign' lands still obsessed him, though he knew realistically that he lacked the funds to support his plans. John himself expressed his wish to go to work for young people in other lands. John claimed he had seen another dream where he was on a vast plain, inhabited by primitive peoples, who spent their time hunting or fighting among themselves or against soldiers in European uniforms. He then saw a band of priests but they were all massacred. A second group then appeared which John at once recognized as Salesians. He was then surprised to witness an unexpected change. When his Salesians approached them the fierce savages laid down their arms and listened to them. This dream made a great impression on John but he remained puzzled for the best part of three years trying to identify the places he saw in the dream.

As his society began functioning requests began coming in from countries in Europe and from beyond. One of the requests was from Patagonia in Argentina. A study of the people there convinced him that the country and its inhabitants were the ones he had seen in his dream. It was not long

before John did receive requests to open centres in Argentina. John regarded this as a sign of Providence and joyfully began preparing his followers for these projects. He sent letters to his Salesians asking for volunteers for these plans. He got more volunteers than he needed which spoke of the generosity of his first Salesians. He also ensured that in the arrangements he made with Bishops in Argentina and elsewhere that his Salesians would not be placed where unfriendly tribes could harm their work.

The Dream Today (2015)

The Head of the Salesians is the Rector Major. The Society has 94 geographical provinces each of them headed by a Provincial, who serves a six-year term. The Rector Major and his General Council of Advisers also have a six-year term and are chosen by representatives from all the provinces in the world who form the General Chapter. Each local community is headed by a superior who is called a Rector who is appointed for a three-year term.

The present Rector Major is Father Angel Fernandez Artime, who was elected on 25th March 2014. Perhaps

it was not by a mere coincidence that Father Angel, during his time as a Provincial in southern Argentina, came into close contact with Pope Francis, who was then Archbishop (later Cardinal) Jorge Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The Salesians today operate shelters for homeless or at-risk youths; schools; technical, vocational, and language instruction centers for youths and adults; and boys' clubs and community centres. In some areas they run parishes. The Salesians are also active in publishing and in communication activities, and in educational-pastoral work across the world. The Salesians publish their official publication, the Salesian Bulletin, in 32 languages.

The Salesians (SDB) today number over 17,000 working in over 120 countries. The Salesian Sisters, [the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians] (FMA), number more than 15,000 in the world. The Salesians today also run over 58 colleges and universities. The official university of the Salesian Society is the Salesian Pontifical University (UPS) in Rome. In India, the Salesians started India's first Catholic University, in Guwahati, Assam: Don Bosco University.

John also established a group called the Salesian Cooperators and another worldwide group called the Past Pupils (of the SDB & of the FMA). The Cooperators are lay people who live the spirituality and ministry of the Salesians. The Past Pupils are men and women who as young people attended a Salesian school, club or parish. Both these groups bring to the workplace, the home and to society the special Salesian 'charism' of joyful service that they imbibed during their student days.

John also pioneered a different style of education. He introduced the

'Preventive System' which provides guidance and a sense of direction to youth so that they can focus on their personal growth and development. The 'preventive' criterion believes in the strength of the good already present in every youngster, and seeks to develop this through positive experiences. It uses three pillars as supports in this system: reason, religion and charity.

'Reason' allows for flexibility and persuasiveness in the education process. 'Religion' seeks to develop the sense of God present in every person. 'Charity' or loving-kindness enables growth and socio-educational development. This System has proved itself over time more than 125 years after John, popularly known as Don Bosco, left this world in 1888. 'Don' meant priest [Father or Reverend] in Italian and John wanted to be known simply as Don Bosco. The Church by making him a Saint in the Catholic Church, in 1934, not only singled him out as an outstanding model of holiness but also confirmed the effectiveness of his System of Education.

Young people today across the world stand in endless queues to enrol in a Don Bosco institution, or proudly proclaim the 'Salesian' experience they treasure. The Salesians [men and women Orders, and associate Institutes] celebrate the feast of their Founder, Saint John Bosco, each year on 31st January. This year, 2015, will indeed be the 200th birth anniversary of Don Bosco.

[Facts from the DB Net sites & the net: written jointly by Una Reeves and T.D'Souza –for Trodza: 31.12.14]

Bicentenary a breakthrough!

This year (2015) the Congregation of the Salesians of Don Bosco is celebrating the 200th Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, its founder. The preparation began three years ago getting to know Don Bosco, knowing his spirituality and educational system. The worldwide pilgrimage of the relic of this saint was part of this preparation. This year is the climax and August 16 his actual birth is when the whole celebration comes to an end.

Some of the typical characteristics of Salesian mission adopted from our father and founder Don Bosco have made it possible to penetrate into the good percentage of cultures in East Africa. I believe that the evangelization, education, human promotion and preferences for the world of youth are the strategies which have made it possible for the missionaries in East Africa to rekindle the Christian values and hope that sum up the needs of this particular population.

This bicentenary is a breakthrough of multicultural reality. The Salesian community life continues to remain



the living testimony, that there is a possibility of coming together and living as a family. In fact, many parishioners admire how new communities are created and live in peace with confreres from different cultural backgrounds. It is in these communities that the characteristic education and evangelization has given a break through to strong ties and traditions. Another key factor is the Salesian pedagogy and spirituality. The Salesian



missionary style in AFE is characterized by amiability, availability, joy, creativity, courage and work without limit, inspired by a passion for education and the salvation of souls. For so many sons of Don Bosco, that courage and faithfulness has rendered AFE the ability to keep to the zeal of the *Da Mihi Animas Caetera Tolle*.

The other practical element is that of picking up of the local vocations. This has also helped to penetrate to the core of the cultural barriers. It is beautiful to see how the Salesians go to the missions to work and to stay. Their pastoral activity and identity has translated not only the gospel values but also met the efforts to promote local vocations. The reality today is that the number of local presences in each community is well presented. A good number of them have assumed key responsibilities like being Rectors, parish priests, administrators or in charge of the technical schools. We cannot deny also that this bicentenary meets the continuous role of our Mother Mary in all the AFE programs. I can bear testimony that the missionary activity has enkindled in many the love and devotion to Mary Help of Christians. The missionary co-operation and economic support is kept alive because of the influence of Mary Help of Christians. Well, the efforts of the Superior house, a mission office has always continued to meet the needs of the province and many projects in Kenya.

I confess that this bicentenary links not only East Africa but also the whole world to that initial spirit of our Salesian origin. Reading through the history and how the mission of the Salesians came to be; opens for a call for you and me to assume the responsibility of rewriting in the hearts of many that love of the gospel that enkindled the heart of Don Bosco. Let us allow this bicentenary to remind us of the zeal and motivation of our Salesian origin. Let the realization of living projects in this world of mushrooming cybernetics remind us that God continues to work through Don Bosco. In fact we say, man cannot deny his history let us not deny our Salesian charism identity that finds its origin in Don Bosco. As sons and daughters of Don Bosco let us then uphold the legacy of taking the risk to communicate the gospel values to those who have not yet seen its light especially the young and abandoned youth.



Don Bosco Tournament

South Sudan is a country that still yearns for peace and peaceful co-existence among the people and especially the youth. Despite the challenges that the country is facing, the Salesians of Don Bosco in Wau South Sudan were able to organize the Don Bosco tournament for peace, particularly among the youth. There is a phrase that says “peace begins at home;” based on this phrase the SDBs in WBGS Wau were able to organize the DB tournament for peace in the Salesian Parish of St. Joseph the worker comprising of six centers of the same parish. It all began with the workshop for all the youth from the six centers of the parish that brought about about 145 young people on Saturday the 17th of January 2015 and culminated today with the opening of the DB Tournament for peace. The match started by a solemn prayer by Rev. Fr. James Lual SDB, the youth animator of the Salesian parish. Then the national anthem of South Sudan and the DB anthem were sung by the youth of the parish. Youth were also animated and encouraged in preparation for the feast of Don Bosco’s birth bi-centenary that “they should be always joyful with Don Bosco who dedicated himself for the young people and for the salvation of souls”. This joy is always reflected in "Da mihi animas." The celebration of Don Bosco's feast at end of this month and preparation for solemn celebration of the centenary brings us the joy of togetherness in preparation of this great celebration. Perhaps it is the most exciting invitation for the youth of the parish today like prophet Zephaniah, who presents God with his people in the midst of a celebration overflowing with the joy of salvation. I personally find it thrilling to read the following text in the context of this festival season for the youth of Wau ‘the Lord your God is in your midst a warrior who gives you the victory, he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival’ (3:17). This is the joy which we experience today among the youth of our parish and it is indeed reflected in those words which Pope Francis conveys to us in his encyclical of *Evangelii Gaudium* and I quote “no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord; “Through the life of Don Bosco who dedicated his life for the young, so that they have it to the full.

Paul Tartisio Kenyi
(reporting for Don Bosco Wau).

The Youth Congress celebration in the Diocese of Rumbek

The Diocese of Rumbek (DOR) the Catholic Church at Lakes state in the Republic of South Sudan celebrated the 6th DOR Youth Congress under the theme; **“Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with all.”(Romans 12: 18)**

The celebration was attended by youth of different parishes of the entire Diocese among these were the youth of Warrap state in some parishes who fall under the jurisdiction of the DOR.

Meanwhile Don Bosco Youth and Brass band led the procession to the Rumbek airport to welcome the Nuncio His Grace Bishop Charles B., His Lordship Bishop Rudolf Deng Majak of Wau Diocese in Western Bahr el Ghazal state. The Governor of Lakes State Major General Matur Chut Dhuol, His deputy Santo Dumic and other state government senior officials were present to receive the guests to Lakes State.

However it was such a joyful celebration to have the Nuncio to South Sudan His Grace Bishop Charles, His Lordship Bishop Deng Majak, Rev. Fr John Mathiang the DOR Coordinator, Fr. Andrea Osman Okello the Parish Priest of the Holy Family Cathedral and the Deputy Governor of Lakes state Mr. Santo Dumic for its official opening.

In their opening remarks, they urged the Youth to start living in peace within themselves for such belongs the present and the tomorrow leaders of South Sudan.

Meanwhile, the facilitators invited the youth to be reconciled among themselves first before the society. “Reconciliation is an important way to build any society,” said the UNMISS representative in Lakes State. He continued by challenging the youth to have the spirit of apology and to be ready to accept mistakes not at the right side at all times so that peace may prevail.

Fr. Henry Gidudu parish priest of Sacred Heart Parish Rumbek in his session on the topic REVENGE invited the youth to seek forgiveness rather than Revenge. “There is a reason for us to forgive and this 2014 youth congress should help us to bring transformation

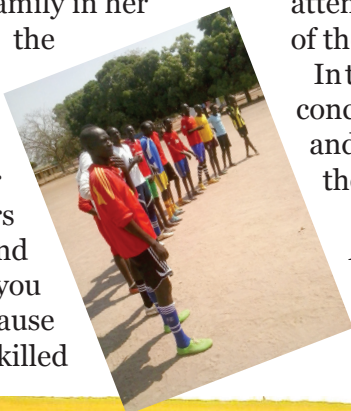


and peace among our people”, said Fr. Henry Gidudu.

In the sports competitions Tonj Sacred Heart Parish leads the whole Diocese in Football and volleyball boys.

In the closing ceremony of the Youth Congress on 15th Sunday, the Lakes state government representative Hon. Dut Makoi the state education minister, called upon the church to continue supporting and advocating for peace in the state and the entire country. “It was through the Church that we South Sudanese gained our independence. Though we are a new independent country, there is still a need to be in close collaboration with the church,” said Hon Dut Makoi.

Mama Mary, a member of the Legion of Mary in the Holy Family in her tearful words urges the youth to put down arms and embrace unity. “My dear children, we your mothers and fathers are in deep sorrow and half dead though you see us walking because everyday youth are killed



in different parts of South Sudan. Who will remain since we are already old?” Said Mama Mary.

His Grace Bishop Charles the Nuncio to South Sudan said that he have heard the cries of the Diocese for its shepherd since three years are past without a Bishop following the death of Late Bishop Ceaser Mazzolari. “I have started the process already and very soon you will have a bishop,” said His Grace Bishop Charles.

Furthermore, Fr. John Mathiang DOR Coordinator and Fr. Andrea Osman Okello the Parish Priest thanked and congratulated the Nuncio, Bishop Rudolf, NGOS, the government of Lakes State, the religious and the youth of different parishes for having come to attend and contributing for the success of the congress.

In the evening of the 15th the celebration concluded with the ceremony of Light and awarding of the certificates and the gifts.

***Macharanga Abraham Kuol Chol
Rumbek,
Lakes State Holy Family.***



“With the spirit of Don Bosco we remain firm”



“The horrors of today’s terrorism motivate us even more, as Salesians and as members of the Salesian Family, to work in those place where human rights are trampled upon, where life itself is at risk, and where there is great need of sympathy and support.” So said the Rector Major of the Salesians, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, referring to the attacks that occurred recently in various parts of the world.

This is not just about France. There is a long list of countries where terrorism is sowing violence and death, creating a situation of generalized alarm and suspicion among the population. In the light of all this, the Rector Major wants to revive the commitment of the Salesian Family in the constant search for peace and, at the same time, to express his closeness to those working in the areas most at risk.

“The places where terrorism occurs today - I am thinking of Gaza, Syria and Iraq ... but also of Nigeria, Yemen, Somalia, Libya, Kenya and many other places worldwide - show without

doubt ‘the cruelty of which man is capable’, as Pope Francis has said. This motivates us even more, as Salesians, and members of the Salesian Family, to work in the areas where human rights are trampled upon, where life itself is at risk, and where there is great need of sympathy and support.

I join the voice of the Pope and all the religious leaders who appeal to all humanity at the present time to put aside feelings of hatred and resentment, and pledge to work together for peace, on the basis of mutual respect and human solidarity.

Courage, Salesians! I am thinking especially of you who are in the areas where even the witness of your life may put you at risk. Courage! With the spirit of Don Bosco, we remain firm. I am with you and I pray for you and for the flock entrusted to you. Jesus and Mary Help of Christians will not fail to support us.”

ANS

A BOY WITH

DURING LENT OF 1826 MARGARET HELPED JOHN PREPARE HIMSELF FOR HIS FIRST CONFESSION. HE WAS JUST 11 YEARS BUT MARGARET THOUGHT IT WAS GOOD TO TEACH HIM ALREADY...



BE OPEN WITH YOUR CONFESSOR AND PROMISE GOD THAT YOU WILL TRY AND DO BETTER IN FUTURE.

JOHNN REMEMBERED THAT DAY WELL: "SHE ACCOMPANIED ME TO CHURCH AND WENT TO CONFESSION BEFORE ME. THEN SHE INTRODUCED ME TO THE PRIEST AND ASKED HIM TO HELP ME. LATER SHE HELPED ME TO THANK THE LORD WHO HAD PARDONED ME."



HE RECALLED LATER: "MY MOTHER HELPED ME MAKE MY THANKSGIVING."

GOD HAS TAKEN POSSESSION OF YOUR HEART. PROMISE HIM THAT YOU WILL DO EVERYTHING TO REMAIN GOOD ALWAYS AND THAT YOU WILL HELP OTHERS TOO...



ON THE 26TH MARCH EASTER SUNDAY, JOHN MADE HIS FIRST HOLY COMMUNION.



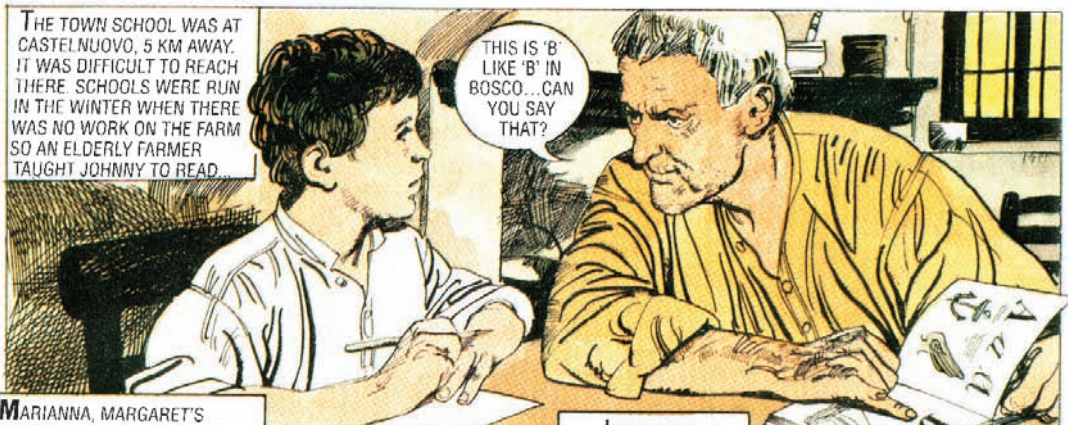
AND FOR LOVE OF HIM, FLEE FROM BAD COMPANIONS AS YOU WOULD THE PLAGUE.

THIS WAS HOW JOHN REMEMBERED THAT DAY LATER: "I THINK THAT FROM THAT DAYON THERE WAS AN IMPROVEMENT IN MY LIFE, ESPECIALLY IN MATTERS OF OBEDIENCE AND SUBMISSION TO OTHERS." (MEMOIRS OF THE ORATORY, PG.33)



A DREAM

THE TOWN SCHOOL WAS AT CASTELNUOVO, 5 KM AWAY. IT WAS DIFFICULT TO REACH THERE. SCHOOLS WERE RUN IN THE WINTER WHEN THERE WAS NO WORK ON THE FARM. SO AN ELDERLY FARMER TAUGHT JOHNNY TO READ.



THIS IS 'B' LIKE 'B' IN BOSCO... CAN YOU SAY THAT?

MARIANNA, MARGARET'S SISTER WAS THE HOUSEKEEPER FOR A PRIEST AT CAPRIGLIO AND SHE FOUND A SOLUTION.



MY LITTLE NEPHEW IS INTELLIGENT! WOULD YOU TAKE HIM INTO SCHOOL?

VERY WELL

JOHN ENTERED A CLASS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE WINTER OF 1824-25



YOU'RE REALLY CLEVER, JOHNNY JUST KEEP ON STUDYING LIKE THIS AND YOU'LL DO WELL.

I WOULD LIKE TO BUT WE ARE POOR, AND I HAVE TO DO MY WORK IN THE FIELDS.

WELCOME BACK, JOHNNY WHENEVER YOU FEEL YOU CAN MAKE THE TIME.

I'D LOVE TO COME BACK, BUT MY BROTHER, ANTHONY WILL STOP ME.

HE SUCCEEDED IN RETURNING TO SCHOOL IN THE WINTER OF 1825-26. IT WAS NOT SO FAR FROM HOME...



“Being with the young people today, a home that evangelizes”

23rd General Chapter of the Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco 2014

Introduction

Every six years a religious Congregation holds a General Chapter which is an assembly of its members chosen by representation from their Provinces and delegations. The purpose of the Chapter is to preserve the spirit of the charism (why it was founded), re-read it in the ecclesial and cultural contexts of today, and make the necessary decisions for its renewed insertion in the contemporary and ecclesial world. Another purpose of the Chapter is to elect the Mother General and her Councillors.

The Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco (also known as the **FMA** from their official title of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Italian - *Figlie Maria*

Ausiliatrice) held their 23rd General Chapter from September 22nd to November 18th 2014 in Rome.

The Chapter theme was: **Being with the young people today, a home that evangelizes**” which guided them in their reflections, sharing and preparation for the Chapter at community and Provincial levels. Each Province then held a Provincial Chapter where they discussed issues and made proposals for the General Chapter, and elected a delegate from the Province.

The General Chapter

Sr. Chantal Mukase, Provincial and Sr. Geraldine Reakes, the elected Delegate represented the AFE Province which consists of Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda at the General Chapter.



After approximately two months of intense work, overtime activity, reflection, study, and discernment, the **194** Chapter participants from the various Salesian Sisters' works in the world, concluded the 23rd General Chapter in Rome on 17th November 2014. Those taking part in the Chapter were spokespersons for the **12,959 Salesian Sisters** working throughout the world.

Today the FMA are present in **94 Nations**, distributed as follows:

- 516 FMA in 24 Nations of Africa-Madagascar
- 4,031 FMA in 23 Nations of America
- 2,473 FMA in 21 Nations of Asia
- 5,890 FMA in 22 Nations of Europe
- 49 FMA in 4 Nations of **Oceania**

These numbers reveal something of the vitality and expansion of the Institute over the years.

During the Chapter the FMA Website kept everyone posted on the latest news and happenings through photos, commentaries, You Tube, Open Forum, etc.

A Time of Renewal

The General Chapter was truly a time of the Holy Spirit and worldwide sharing. Though coming from different realities, they breathed the same charism, the same missionary zeal that Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello left to them. The Chapter members took away with them the experience of an authentically lived fraternity, a perception of a real **world view** of the Salesian work, and the indications of the Chapter Document that will be translated in practically all the individual Salesian realities.

The message of the 23rd General Chapter is summed up in these words: **“Broaden the vision! With the young, missionaries of hope and joy.”** This was the appeal that resonated most in hearts, as a commitment to

witness to the values proper to the Salesian identity that revitalizes the passion for God and for young people, and invites us to “be out-going”, and to go to the youth **periphery** which needs the light.

The Scripture *theme* of the whole Chapter document is the **Emmaus story** (Lk. 24, 13-33), which runs through the whole text. The Documents states: “A similar process of renewal takes place in every educating community when people listen to reality, are open to dialogue, and ready to re-read life experiences in the light of a true encounter with Jesus, who motivates us to go out to others with enthusiasm and joy, aware that we are missionary disciples”.

The Pope's Message to Participants

The Chapter participants had the privilege of an audience with Pope Francis on Saturday November 8th 2014 at the Vatican and were received by him with these words, *“Welcome young people with joy as Don Bosco did.”*

The newly re-elected Mother General, Mother Yvonne Reungoat addressed a cordial greeting to the Pope, thanking him for his closeness to the Institute. She then stressed: “We cannot imagine future paths for our Religious Family without young people, especially the poorest. In their often unspoken questions we read the need to *feel at home*, that is, to have affective and social points of reference, to belong, and to be able to share Gospel values and action. Young people are the place where God speaks to us, meets us, transforms us and sends us. They are the protagonists in the building of the new evangelisation and, in a certain way, also our teachers. In fact, they pass on to us the art of hoping, the patience of waiting, the joy



of meeting and sharing friendship, the desire for genuine faith that touches practical life, the need for a simple life, centred on the essential.”

Pope Francis, with his usual simple and family-like style, spoke to the Chapter Members, recalling the origins of the Salesian charism and inviting them above all to **“go out”, to “set out”** for the **many peripheries**, paying special attention to the poor. He then continued: “Be a prophetic witness and an **educational presence** everywhere, **through unconditional acceptance of young people**, facing the challenge of intercultural settings and identifying pathways that will make your apostolic interventions efficacious in a context – that of young people – that is permeated by the virtual world and by new and especially digital technologies.”

The Unexpected Happened

One of the functions of a General Chapter is to elect the Mother General and members of the General Council. This is a time of much prayer, reflection

and of course, curiosity to know the leadership for the next 6 years. **Mother Yvonne Reungoat** was re-elected as Mother General of the Institute. Some former Councilors were also re-elected and those whose term of office had expired, were replaced by new members of the General Council.

Nonetheless, General Chapters have a way of surprising us with the unexpected and this one was no different! When the FMA Website announced that our Provincial, **Sr. Chantal Mukase**, was elected a Visiting Councillor, the Sisters were taken aback not for any other reason than “it has actually happened to us – our Provincial has been chosen!” Of course, they are honored and pleased that someone has been chosen again from Africa to be on the General Council for someone’s loss is another’s gain.

*FMA Website /
Sr. Virginia Bickford, fma*

Education is a Matter of the Heart

One Past Pupil's experience in Rwanda

My name is Jean Marie Vianney Muzamunzi and I am a 27 year old Rwandan from Gisenyi. I am very excited because I plan to get married to a wonderful girl in Stella Maris Parish Gisenyi on February 14th. In distributing my wedding invitations to family and friends, the first persons to receive it personally from me were Sr. Gisele Ndekezi and the Salesian Sisters at Mother Mazzarello Technical Secondary School (MMTSS) Gisenyi. To tell you the truth I don't know where I'd be today if it weren't for their love and care for poor needy youth...and I was definitely one of them at the time!

After Senior 3 (Form I in Kenya) I wanted to continue my secondary education in a secondary technical school that offered some kind of *hands-on* skills even though it would be difficult for me because of family problems and school fees. I felt discouraged and resigned myself to a hopeless future of lost dreams. Then one day while listening to the announcements in church, I heard about the Hotel Operations Technology option offered at MMTSS. I was suddenly filled with new hope and I decided to go and register that very day. I was accepted immediately and my dreams for the future were revived!

However, they were temporarily short lived in my first year. Family issues came to plague me. I temporarily dropped out of school to take care of the problems that landed on my shoulders. I kept thinking of how I would ever continue my studies and how these bad situations would end up!

Eventually things got better and I returned to school even though school fees still remained a problem. However, Sr. Gisele the Principal kept encouraging me not to give up.

In the three years I stayed at MMTSS I breathed the Salesian spirit to the full and fell in love



with Don Bosco and Mary Mazzarello and all that they stood for! My education there formed me personally, intellectually, spiritually, socially and morally in my daily life challenging me to be a Good Christian and Honest Citizen. I learned the importance of discipline and acquired the skills for competency in my field of study. I learned to be curious and inquisitive about things I did not know and to trust in God's care for the future. MMTSS was truly my "Mother"!

Some of my best memories were the powerful and inspirational Goodmornings given by the Sisters and teachers, the lively celebrations of Don Bosco, Mary Mazzarello and other Feasts, and the weekly *umuganda* where teachers and sisters cleaned the compound together with the students in unity and joy! I did well in my National Exam in 2011. In fact, 12 of the 14 students in my class received government scholarships to the university! This was a dream come true because most of us would have been unable to go onto higher education without financial assistance. I am presently a student at Remera Hospitality Academy University studying Culinary Arts. I am also employed at Sports View Hotel in Kigali. My dream is to be an Executive Kitchen Chef or a Culinary Arts Teacher. I ask the Lord that I may continue to following the pathway shown to me at MMTSS.

Lastly, my advice to young people is to follow the rules and regulations wherever you are and be Good Christians and honest Citizens if you want to succeed.

Jean Marie Vianney Muzamunzi

Over 5300 Don Bosco students rally for peace



Over 5300 students from 12 Salesian Schools and other Salesian family institutions of Guwahati, India, participated in a Peace Rally on Friday 30 January from Dighalipukri to Don Bosco School Panbazar in the city as part of the bicentenary commemoration of Don Bosco's birth.

The students enthusiastically took part in the rally with placards in hand. The special attractions of the colourful rally were the three bands from Don Bosco Schools Boko, Amguri, and the city's Little Flower School, Hatigaon who played some beautiful music as the rally passed the main thoroughfares of the entire route.

The rally was flagged off by chief guest Dr. Dhruba Jyoti Saikia, Vice-Chancellor, Cotton College State University in the presence of a number of dignitaries such as Provincial Fr. VM Thomas, Vice-Provincial Fr. Thomas Lakra, Provincial Economist Fr. K J Thomas, and a big number of Salesian Priests, Sisters and school alumni.

After the rally through the streets the programme continued in the school football field where a sea of students filled up the entire area. Songs for the function were rendered by "Vibes", the host school's choir group led by music teacher Papu Gohain. Fr. VM Thomas in his speech reiterated the need for peace in today's global scenario and said that "peace is possible" if we all desire it.

Actions of the Job Placement Desk at Don Bosco Development Office Nairobi

Assisting Young People to find Jobs

The Job placement desk is a recruitment and career desk at DBDON. Its primary duty is to create and enhance the links between employers and Don Bosco training institutions with a view of exploiting employment opportunities for young people.

Addressing the Problems of the World of Work:

One of the key challenges facing the African youth is lack of relevant education, knowledge and skills required to enhance their absorption into the labor market. At the same time, there are so many complex structural and frictional constraints related to lack of employability. Our findings show that new entrants in the labor market are mainly youth who are ready to take any type of job, provided that it secures their immediate survival. These youth can easily be co-opted for harmful ends. This would not be the case if such youth were prepared to join the informal sector and adjust their life styles accordingly. It is known that youth unemployment leads to social exclusion, crime, drug abuse, vandalism and religiously motivated violence. The Job Placement Desk is meant to address some of the mentioned challenges arising from youth unemployment.

Following newly employed youth

The Job Placement Officer also carries frequent follow-up visits to check on the progress of our students that are already working in various companies. These visits are also meant to create more confidence with the companies and our institutions, and solve conflicts that may arise between our past-pupils and their employers.



Making youth a success story

75% of the total registered applicants find job connections within six months.

Past students who do not find job connections opt to start and operate their own businesses successfully.

Job Placement Desk is now partnering with some international recruitment agencies who have connected more than 10 of our past students with international jobs.

Centralization of industries: most industries are located in most urban areas in Kenya. This has been caused by the continued influx of rural to urban migration that has seen the rise of slums and shanties in urban areas. For the majority of students, the high cost of living associated in the city deters them from taking up job opportunities despite our efforts.

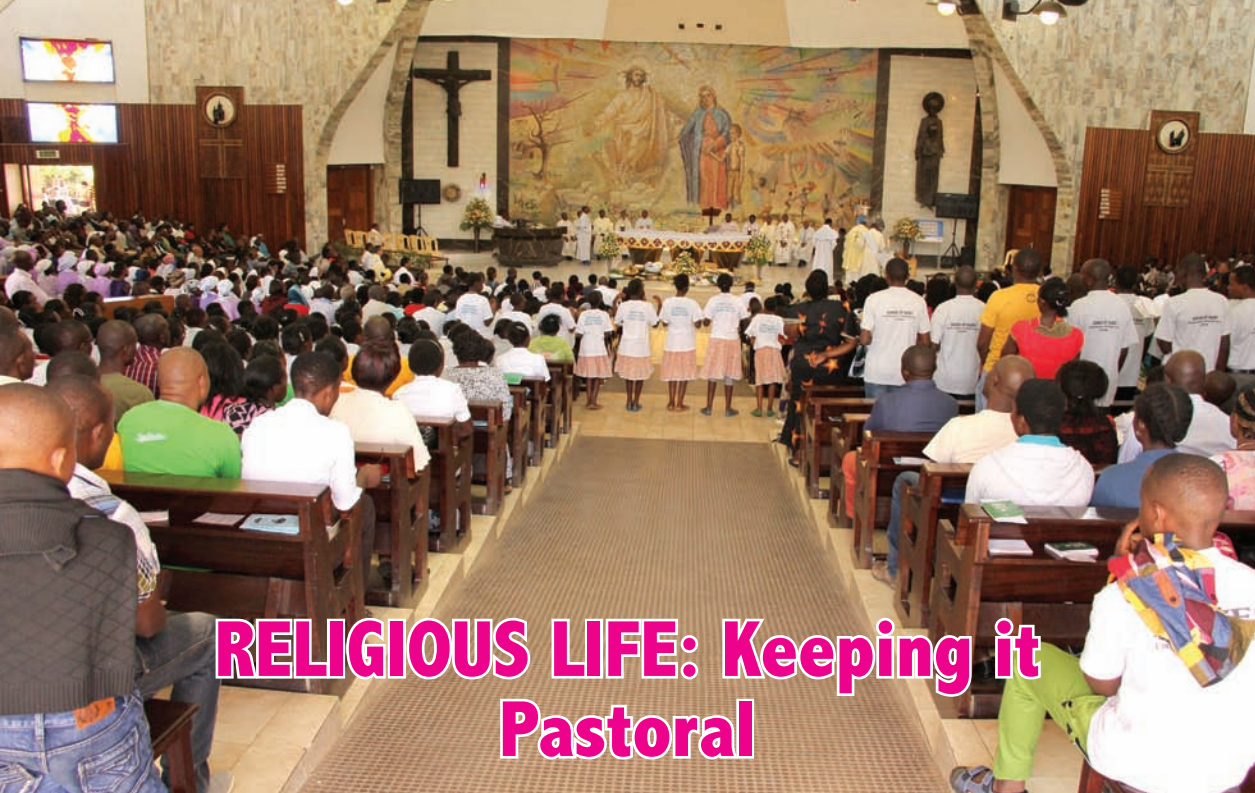
Refugees employment: the employment of refugees in Kakuma camp Kenya has become a problem despite their qualifications due to the work permit required from them before we could place them for job opportunities in the companies that might be interested in employing them.

Employers' asking for previous experiences is a hindrance to the fresh graduates from our institutions.

Lack of tools or seed capital to enable some of the past students who would want to open up a workshop or venture into a small business. The demands from the available financing institutions are too high for our youth.

Challenges in finding adequate jobs for all the trades: all trades have market demand but some trades have more demand in the job market than others.





RELIGIOUS LIFE: Keeping it Pastoral

Choosing to be a Vowed Religious is choosing to live the Christian life deeper than others who live their “ordinary” Christian life in a secular world. Vowed Religious (being members of Religious congregations and institutes of consecrated life) take the vows of poverty, obedience and chastity and live a common life with fellow religious. It is an expression of one’s passionate love for Christ and committing one’s life to be led rather than to lead, to love all rather than giving oneself to an individual in conjugal life, it is choosing to be poor in a world engrossed in material welfare. It is taking an active part in the conversation of the world.

But in the midst of doing many things for Christ it is possible to forget Christ. While doing Christ’s work Christ can be forgotten. It is missing the obvious. It is like a fish forgetting the water and human beings forgetting the air we breathe. If we forget to convert the world the world will convert us. Religious are called to be agents of change in the

world; to be initiators of change in the world using the very evangelical life of being poor, chaste and obedient.

Surely the humanitarian services offered by the Religious especially in the developing world are very commendable. the Catholic Church is often identified with its educational and health institutions. But it is possible to turn religious life into agents of humanitarian services devoid of Godliness and ecclesial spirit. Perhaps to an extent it has already become so. Undoubtedly many of our institutions offer good services and serve the deserving people. It can be also true that given our training, available means and well placed connections many Religious are “experts” in much needed offering services. But what is our Vocation?

In the past two decades or so Uganda has seen several private institutions initiated by private citizens taking the upper hand in education and the health sector. Though offering good services most of them may have commercial

intentions. It is a fact that today many religious institutions are “competing” with other institutions for survival and efficiency. Doing many of these important social services has been a “monopoly” of the church for the past one hundred years—from the beginning of the introduction of various Christian denominations in Uganda. In this activity the Catholic Church through dedicated Catholic religious congregations had a great advantage of offering this much needed service, largely because of their vowed life.

A vocation promotion brochure listed the following qualities as needed to join Religious Life:

- ❖ A love of God that manifests itself in a desire to give one’s life as a witness to the immensity of God’s love for all people.
- ❖ The ability to relate with a variety of people, to be happy alone or in a group.
- ❖ Joy in serving others in any outreach or parish involvement.
- ❖ Generosity.
- ❖ The ability to listen to others and accept direction when needed.
- ❖ A desire to love expansively rather than needing an intimate relationship with one person.
- ❖ A desire to grow in union with God through prayer and service of the needy.

It is back to basics. What is essential in Religious Life? It is a life of witness, a desire to grow in union with God and joy in serving others. In short it is giving Jesus the priority he deserves. We can be engrossed in being a teacher, a nurse, a social worker, an administrator or any other dignitary, but what kind of a witness are we offering? What is our way operating? In the name of efficiency we can easily forget to keep efficacy of being a Religious. If we fail

to counter act secularism squarely we will become agents of secularism—promoting materialism, consumerism and individualism. These are the values of the world that are unevangelical and negating our Religious life.

While being busy offering services in the name of Jesus how much of our time we are giving for Jesus himself? When a Religious Sister or a Religious Brother does not find time for personal prayer and keeps his liturgical life minimal, he or she is counter-witness to evangelical life. A religious who only cares for his or her secular profession as a nurse or teacher or an administrator of institution and does not find time for pastoral work such as offering sacraments, teaching catechism, giving catechetical assistance, and making pastoral visits in the parishes is failing in the primary duties of a Religious. It is common to hear from a tired Religious, “I have only weekends for myself, I am tired, I have few personal things to do...” It is missing the obvious.

It is only through our prayer life and pastoral work and doing secular work with the touch of pastoral charity we can keep our Religious identity. It is being charismatic. Charismatic identity and apostolic passion come from a “radical Gospel approach”, which is none other than *contemplating Christ in such a way that it allows us to become, little by little, a faithful image of him*. Our conformation with Christ, on the other hand, consists in making his way of being and acting our own, obedient, poor and chaste, filled with compassion for the poor, loving them and loving poverty. He made this a true beatitude such that it can be lived joyfully, humbly and simply.

Fr. Lazar Arasu SDB

Three Years on!!! Still I am an Idealist

In my adult life I always wanted to work with and for street children; first in my home country Slovenia, then in Ethiopia in Bosco Children and then in Kenya. I came to Bosco Boys Nairobi in February 2012 and spent two good years as a volunteer. I am a social worker by profession. Almost 200 former street boys in Bosco Boys Langata and Kuwinda, plus others who were under our sponsorship after completing the program at Bosco Boys, were all with us. There were daily new requests for

admissions, so as a social worker there were a great deal that I could do, and great deal that I have learnt which I could not learn anywhere else.

One thing is sure: life does not give equal opportunities to all. I met children and their families with stories of suffering, poverty, negligence, abuse, devastation... in a country that is very rich in many ways. Daily I was meeting boys, whose family was absent or unable to provide food, shelter and education, so they are forced to look for



means by themselves. By stealing or by earning something little with street jobs (like collecting garbage etc.). Countless number of children live like this and only small percentage have possibility of rehabilitation in a centre like Bosco Boys. I did many intake interviews which gave an opportunity to understand the stories of the new-comers, I visited many homes of the boys, mainly in the slums of Nairobi which were all very similar. It all ended under the same line: poverty, and connected with that is lack of opportunities. For example: How can a single mother, with 4 or 5 children, who lives in the slum on a few square meters space for Ksh 1000 to 2000 per month earns 200 shillings on a very good day by washing clothes for the rich people in the nearby estate, feed and educate the children. In addition she is constantly under the threat of losing that small roof above their head if she doesn't pay the rent?

It is never the child's fault that he is in the street. How can it be? He is just a child, who came to this world and is entrusted into hands of the adult world, which fails, too often to take care of him. He is just a child. And when he or she fails in his or her life, it is OUR failure.

What do I mean by "our"? I mean all of us. Society who is divided into rich and poor, with rich being unable to share whatever they can with the poor. I mean institutions who receive these children and the child still doesn't prosper in his life. I mean society who is ignorant to the world and needs of children.

In short this is what I can say after being almost 3 years in Kenya. Now I don't work with Bosco Boys anymore, but I work FOR them, in the headquarters of Don Bosco East Africa. I'm daily struggling and trying to touch the hearts of people of Kenya in order to get sympathy with those who are less fortunate, and to be able to give and share. It is so hard to get help until it hurts. It shouldn't be that difficult! Kenya has enough resources for all its citizens, once we change the value of materialism for the values of love and respect for every person there need not be any child in the street.

I can describe my experience at Bosco Boys with one sentence: there is nothing nobler or more important in the world than saving lives of needy children, and I am happy that in Bosco Boys I was part of that noble cause.

Polona Dominik



Salesians Archbishops Sturla and Bo named among new cardinals



During his Angelus talk on Sunday, January 4, Pope Francis announced the names of the new cardinals whom he will nominate at the consistory of February 14. He informed the crowd in St. Peter's Square: "As was already announced, next February 14 I will have the joy of holding a consistory, during which I will nominate 15 new cardinals, who come from 14 nations and every continent, manifesting the inseparable ties between Church of Rome and the particular Churches of the world."

Among the new cardinals are the Salesians Archbishop Charles Maung Bo, archbishop of Yangon (Rangoon), Burma, and Archbishop

Daniel Fernando Sturla, archbishop of Montevideo, Uruguay.

Archbishop Bo's nomination represents tremendous news for Burma, where the Catholic Church has been present more than 500 years; for the Salesians it represents and confirms the importance of their presence, which has been part of the Calcutta Province for 80 years.

Archbishop Charles Maung Bo was born at Mohla on October 29, 1948. He was ordained on April 9, 1976. He prefect apostolic of Lashio for six years (1985-1990); from 1990 to 1996 he was bishop of the newly-erected diocese of Lashio. Transferred to the diocese of Pathein in 1996, he continued as apostolic administrator of diocese of Lashio until 1998, and after that for a year as administrator of the archdiocese of Mandalay; in 2003 he was named archbishop of Yangon.

He is currently in charge of the Office of Human Development of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences, a member of the Commission for Religious of FABC, and a member of the Pontifical Council for Culture. Archbishop Bo is the first Burmese cardinal.

Archbishop Daniel Fernando Sturla Berhouet, SDB, was born on July 4, 1959, at Montevideo. After earning a bachelor's degree in civil law at the John XXIII Institute, he completed his studies in philosophy and education at the Salesians' Michael Rua Institute in Montevideo.

He studied theology at what was then called the Bishop Mariano Soler Theological Institute of Uruguay, earning a licentiate in theology in 2006. He entered the novitiate in 1979 and made his first religious profession on January 31, 1980. On November 21, 1987, he was ordained. After his ordination he served as vicar of the Salesian novitiate and postnovitiate, director of the Salesian aspirantate and master of novices, director of the John XXIII Pre-university Institute, and professor of Church history.

On October 28, 2008, he was named Salesian provincial for Uruguay, and shortly after was elected president of the Conference of Religious of Uruguay. On December 10, 2011, Pope Benedict XVI named him titular bishop of Felbes and auxiliary bishop

of Montevideo. On February 11, 2014, Pope Francis promoted him to archbishop of Montevideo, Uruguay. Within the Episcopal Conference of Uruguay he has been put in charge of the Departments of the Missions and of the Laity.

“Let’s pray for the new cardinals, so that, by renewing their love for Christ, they may be witnesses of his Gospel in the city of Rome and in world, and with their pastoral experience may give me strong support in my apostolic service,” Pope Francis concluded.

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Don Bosco’s Feast in the Bicentenary year



Unlike the previous years, in Kenya, this year the feast of Don Bosco on January 31st was celebrated at the national level at the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco Upper Hill. This was because, this year, 2015 is the Bi-centenary of the birth of Don Bosco. This is a special occasion for all, Salesians, Salesian sisters, all the member groups of the salesian family, 30 of them, and all those who are in one way or other touched by this great saint.

Every Salesian community in Kenya was represented, even the two communities that were far, Koror and Kakuma. The difference this year was that every community was given a tent within the premises of Don Bosco Upper Hill to exhibit their activities and to talk about their mission and vision to all those who visited them. It was an eye opener for the people of Nairobi who came for the feast to Upper Hill to get to know more about what other communities do in their respective places. “I have heard about other Don Boscos at various occasions but I am so happy that I had a chance today to see and hear about what they do. I wanted to visit those places, but those places came to me here, I am grateful,” that was the remark made by one of the parishioners of Upper Hill. To add color to the occasion various communities came with their youth who entertained the visitors to the tents with their Brass band, cultural dancers and other forms of fun filled activities.

There were three Masses as usual on a Sunday, but the main one was at 11.30 am at which Fr. Provincial spoke about the wonders of Don Bosco. He stressed upon, why we do what we are doing today.

Something beautiful happened on that day. Two lay people made their promise to the Lord to be Salesian cooperators, one a missionary volunteer from Slovenia and the other a Kenyan. That was a moment of witness.

Another highlight of the day was the recognition given to Don Bosco by the government of Kenya for all the work Salesians do. A postal stamp was released by the Postal Corporation of Kenya honoring Don Bosco. That was truly a moment of glory for the Salesian presences in this country.

Now the challenge is for the Salesians and the members of the Salesian family to live the legacy left by Don Bosco by truly loving and caring for the needy youth.

Twelfth Boscoree Held in India

Theme: “Heal the world with Love”

The twelfth Boscoree of India began on 30 December, with over 3000 enthusiastic scouts and guides gathered in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu. The president of the event, Fr. Albert Johnson SDB, Provincial of Trichy province, declared Boscoree 2014 open with a call to “Heal the world with Love.” This was the theme of the meeting. Fr Maria Arokiam Kanaga, Councillor for Southern Asia, was present at the event.

This is the twelfth Boscoree bringing together the Don Bosco Scouts and Guides from all over India. This year’s Boscoree is of added significance as it is being held in the bicentenary year of Don Bosco’s birth. 3225 participants from 160 scout troops and guide companies from the Don Bosco Institutions all over India are participating in this mega event. There are 260 organisers including Salesians, Salesian Sisters, Rovers and Rangers.

The solemn inauguration of Boscoree 2014 began at 5.30 pm in the presence of the Chief Guest of the inaugural ceremony, Mr. Kulandai Francis, Ramon Magsaysay, award winner and President of TVDP Krishnagiri. At the start the Scouts and guides displayed a brilliant march past, and Fr. Albert Johnson SDB, the Provincial of the Salesian Province of Tiruchy, received the salute of honour.

After the calling “to heal the world with Love”, compassion and brotherhood, and to promote justice and peace all over the world, Fr. Johnson released a book on Boscoree named “Scouting through Boscoree.” It is

edited by Fr. John Barnabas SDB, one of the members of the organizing team. Sr Magnificat, Provincial of the FMA Province of Chennai, addressed the gathering and invited the scouts and guides to inculcate empathy and love to heal the world.

As part of the Boscoree Camp Programme, on the final day of the camp, 3 January, the all India Don Bosco Scouts and Guides gathering this year broke the Guinness World Record, for the biggest number of People Wearing Paper Hats simultaneously. They were wearing paper hats like the Biretta worn by St. John Bosco!

The hats were made out of old newspapers as a way of educating the campers to the concept of “Recycling” and “Keeping India Clean.” This is part of a campaign which the Prime Minister of India launched in 2014 to be implemented by every citizen of the country. The record was remarkable and especially significant on the occasion of the bicentenary of the birth of St. John Bosco that is celebrated this year.

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Bicentenary Celebration of Don Bosco's Birth

DON BOSCO KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP

The Kakuma refugee camp was established in 1991 to accommodate South Sudanese refugees fleeing conflict and violence. Over the years, however, the camp has taken in refugees from many other African countries including South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, DRC Congo, Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Eritrea, Uganda and many other countries in Africa. Currently, the camp houses 180,000 multi-ethnic refugees, a number significantly larger than what the facility was originally built for.

The camp is administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and falls under the jurisdiction of the Kenyan Government which after the adoption of the Kenya Refugee Act of 2006, exercises its

control through the Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA).

The refugee camp is accessible by just one highway on the Kenyan northern corridor. Swept by frequent dust storms, ravaged by high day time temperatures and communicable diseases such as malaria and cholera and infested with venomous reptiles this semi-desert region is grossly inhospitable to human habitation.

The Salesians of Don Bosco, began their activities in the Kakuma Refugee Camp in 1992. Over the years their work among the refugees steadily grew in reach and scope and now they have a full-fledged technical centre imparting training in trades like carpentry, masonry, welding, motor vehicle mechanics, plumbing, electrical, tailoring, dressmaking, computer, and



secretarial work. There is also a full-fledged English language coaching centre and another for providing training in agriculture.

Ever since their arrival the Salesians have worked untiringly and have contributed their might to improve the living conditions of the refugees. The camp is a “small city” of thatched roof huts, tents, and mud structures. Living inside the camp is equally prison and exile. Once admitted, refugees do not have the freedom to move about the country. Inside this small city at the edge of the desert, children are born, they age into adulthood and their hope fades to resignation.

At Kakuma, the refugees are almost completely dependent on international humanitarian assistance for food and other supplies. The scarcity of food in the region is exacerbated by shortage of water and unsuitability of land for farming purposes. The refugees are especially vulnerable. While there has been a constant influx of refugees, aid has largely stagnated or dwindled stretching available supplies dangerously thin and pushing rampant malnutrition to life-threatening levels. No effort is spared by Don Bosco to organize distribution of food and nutrition to the refugees aided by generous contributions from various agencies.

On 18th January, 2015 the Community of Don Bosco Kakuma Celebrated the Feast of the Bicentenary of Don Bosco’s birth with the staff, students and the Parishioners of Holy Cross Parish. We were joined by the priests and religious of the neighbouring parishes. The Celebration was honored with the presence of two Bishops: Bishop Virgilio Pante of Maralal Diocese who was also our guest of honour and Bishop Dominic of Lodwar Diocese. Fr. Gianni Rolandi, the Provincial of the Salesian Eastern Africa added more meaning through his



presence as a caring father who travelled all the way from the comfort of Nairobi to this dry and dusty land. We were also joined by the various heads of agencies from UNHCR, NCKK, NRC and others.

It was a very colorful celebration. The refugees were very happy and did their best in preparing for this great feast. It was very rare occasion for them. The Feast started with the Holy Eucharist which was presided over by His Lordship, Bishop Virgilio Pante. In his homily he stressed the “Motherhood of the Church”. He said that the Church as a mother (a) Feeds the children, (b) Teaches the children. It takes care of the children. Therefore, the poor and the suffering like the refugees have a very special place in the heart of the Church. He also emphasized the importance of living in peace and harmony with each other, though we are from different nationalities. We are one family, the family of God.

After the Holy Eucharist the parishioners performed their various cultural dances. At last we all went for lunch where the parishioners shared a meal according to their own sub-stations. They were all very happy. Long live Don Bosco!

The Archbishop of Freetown: how we are beating Ebola



“Sierra Leone is on its knees but hope is growing day by day,” Archbishop Edward Tamba Charles of Freetown told the Agency MISNA. His country was the hardest hit by the epidemic of Ebola, with 3,000 confirmed deaths and over 10,000 cases of infection. But now, as confirmed by the latest figures from the World Health Organization, the most difficult stage is over and we can try again to make a fresh start. “This is thanks,” the archbishop emphasizes, “to a collective commitment”.

The Archbishop was then interviewed and gave these remarks

Archbishop, according to the WHO, the number of cases continues to decrease

“There are data that fill us with hope. They confirm a trend that has been going on for weeks, with a gradual reduction of new infections. Last Monday (12 January - ed) schools reopened in Guinea and even here, if the improving trend is confirmed, children could resume classes as early as March.”

How was it possible to achieve these results?

“At the beginning, Ebola caught us by surprise. It was something completely new and we did not know what to do. We were overwhelmed and external aid was fundamental. There was the contribution of *Doctors Without Borders* and other NGOs, but we must not forget the awareness campaigns promoted by the Government of Sierra Leone and the commitment of local religious and traditional leaders. We, as the Catholic Church, joined the Ebola Prevention Network. But no result would have been reached without the collective effort of all.”

Did Ebola force you to change any habits? And in the life of the Church, in particular, what changed?

“In agreement with the Muslims and other religious communities we gave instructions aimed at avoiding the spread of the epidemic. We asked the faithful not to shake hands at the sign of peace during mass. I gave the communion host in the hand, always explaining the basic elements of the necessary precautions. However, we never told the people not to come to church and participation in services remained high.

What impact will the epidemic have from an economic point of view?

“The first problem is unemployment. There has always been unemployment, but now it’s gone out of control. Some foreign companies, including mining companies, closed and let local employees go. The impact of Ebola has been devastating for the catering and entertainment sector. We hope that with the end of the epidemic foreign companies will come back and that the economy can get on its feet again. We can start from agriculture, one of the areas hardest hit. We need to get back to the fields right away and hope that by September-October there will be a really good harvest “.

A Minors Endeavour for Peace and Justice ...



Born in a culture that has appropriated the belief that a mother should not take away the children upon separation, James Okumu (not his real name) is left under the mercy of a disinterested father whom according to his description is ever angry, beats him up and makes him live in fear.

This pushes him to the streets in pursuit of his maternal love. His daily routine is characterized by assembling nails and glasses which he sells to earn a living. The mission is challenging however. His livelihood is interrupted by the buyer who exploits him and sends him away declaring that his inhuman condition (dirty and tattered clothes, unkempt hair does not allow to hire him). Circumstances push him to sleeping out in the cold. People living around his place of refuge during the night notice his sense of belonging.

Upon their enquiry to know of the whereabouts of the parents, James retells of maltreatment and denied love. Neighbors and close relatives confirm of child neglect and describe the new family set up (biological father

and a step mother) to undergo a crisis. For sometimes, neighbors host him restoring his human dignity. The new found family reveal an admirable character in James whom they describe as active, brilliant and good hearted.

After months in the new found family, James expresses his great interest in having equal rights as his playing mates. This happens when the school term commences and the other children return to school life.

Our duty as human being to pursue the common good obliges us to see that James gets rights. He gets integrated to Don Bosco boys school for street boys where we are certain he will get proper care, education and later skills to honest citizenship.

We thank the Salesians of Don Bosco and recognize the great significance of the mission in curbing the great challenges of our society whom without them our society would be in crisis due to abandoned and neglected minors who end up in the streets.

Caroline Gitau

The story of an exceptional young man



Nicholas García Mayor is 35 years old. He is an industrial designer and has been named by International Youth Chamber as one of the top ten young people in the world for his contribution to children, world peace and human rights. When he graduated in 2001, he lived for two years in the radiology department of an abandoned clinic because he could not afford to pay rent. He recently spoke to the UN and was received by the Pope. His story shows how much young people can contribute to the common good and how important it is to support their efforts.

What makes Nicholas García Mayor exceptional is the system he devised to provide immediate shelter in cases of natural disasters such as earthquakes or floods. It allows people affected by these disasters to find shelter almost instantly, where they can rest and eat while the authorities are working to restore normality. His solution is a survival kit made of materials that insulate from cold and damp. It can be assembled in eleven minutes and is easily transported because it is lightweight and can be folded and stacked.

Dr García Mayor explained his system on *Radio 10*: “It is a kind of box with side wings that can be opened to create a space of about fourteen square metres, enough for up to ten people to live in. The modules can be joined to equip hospitals or schools.”

After presenting the project, García Mayor emigrated to Spain where he worked in several major companies in Barcelona, before deciding to return home. “I went from living in an abandoned clinic to having a house facing the Mediterranean. But I felt that I was helping only myself. I could not stay away from my family and from Argentina, where I feel a strong sense of belonging.”

Back in Argentina, in his hometown Bahía Blanca, he started from scratch, until in 2012 he received an email from the purchasing office of the UN asking him to present his old thesis and project for humanitarian aid. Two weeks later he was invited to Washington to present it to different organizations.

Many of them liked his idea because a method of emergency accommodation would be useful also for the more than fifty million people who are refugees as a consequence of the many wars in the world.

“I learned English in order to present the project. They told me that my idea was incredible. They had spent twenty years trying to find something similar and they wanted a substantial amount of these products,” said Dr García Mayor. “I explained to them that it was a degree thesis in need of backing and they said ‘Well, the world will see to that, because we want you to come to the Assembly of the UN so that all the presidents will get to know about it. It is was like something that happens only in a film!’”

Before he spoke to the United Nations, the young man from Argentina received another surprise - an email from the Vatican Nunciature. “They had organized for me to meet the Pope, so I went and I chatted with Pope Francis. At one point, while I was presenting the project, it dawned on me that I was speaking with the Pope in Rome.”

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