



Australian

Salesian Bulletin

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Autumn: Leaves and temperatures are falling, now is the time to find the little-noticed goodness that abounds in everyday moments



When referring to the saints, Pope Francis presented the figure of one of the Holy Patrons of the World Youth Day. "I think for example of Don Bosco who did not go to look for young people in far places or special locations; he simply learned to see everything that happened in the city with the eyes of God and, thus, his heart was stricken by hundreds of children, of abandoned young people without chance for study, without work and without the helping hand of a community. Many people lived in the same city, many criticized these young people, but they were unable to look at them with the eyes of God. Young people must be looked at with the eyes of God."

Referring to the Saint of the young people, Francis presented Don Bosco as a saint who took several steps in favour of abandoned young people: "Don Bosco was courageous, and he dared to take that first step: to embrace life just as it comes and, from there, he was not afraid to take the second step: to create with them (young people) a community, a family, where, with work and study, they felt loved. To give them roots from which to hold themselves up, so that they can reach heaven, so that they can be someone in society; to give them roots so that they can stand steady and not be thrown down by the next wind. That is what Don Bosco did, that's what the saints do, that's what is done by communities that know how to look at young people with the eyes of God."

[Pope Francis: Homily World Youth Day Panama 2019]



Cover

Despite the extraordinary nature of WYD, it was the simplicity of waving hands and smiling faces that became common language throughout the streets of Panama City, amongst pilgrims and locals alike.

Photo by Lauren Hichaaba

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The Bulletin Team

Fr F. Freeman - Editor
 Michael Gartland - Journalist
 Fr O. Cantamessa - Production Manager
 Br Barry Parker - Photographer
 Ashley Trethowan - Publishing & Distribution

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Salesian Bulletin Office

P O Box 264, Ascot Vale 3032
 Phone: (03) 9377 6000
 Email: ffreeman@salesians.org.au

Salesian Missions Office

3 Middle Street, Ascot Vale 3032

Web Page

www.salesians.org.au

 [@salesianbulletinaustralia](https://www.facebook.com/salesianbulletinaustralia)



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Fr Frank Freeman SDB
 PO Box 264,
 Ascot Vale 3032

Abounding goodness



What a summer it has been so far! We have had our fill of sea disasters, volcanoes, bush fires, going-ons of presidents and dictators, corruption and bribery in high places, scandals amid the pillars of society, massacres in foreign countries and murders of the aged and defenceless in our own. I think I will give up on reading newspapers.

Our newspapers and media, with regular monotony and high selectivity, focus on the negative. Convinced as they are that *“good news does not sell newspapers”*, they marshal from the daily life of this world all the spectacular, the disastrous, the violent, and dish it all up to us as our daily fare. After all, to make money is the name of their game; they distort a wonderful positive force for good in the pursuit of coins.

I have often wondered what effect such a constant barrage of the negative aspects of life upon regular newspaper readers could have. Do they become hardened and insensitive? Do great disasters earn no more than a shaking of the head and a *“Tut! Tut!”*? And herein lies the danger. As we become immune to the violent and the negative, our appreciation of the beautiful and the positive becomes dulled alongside it. It was the poet Francis Thompson who warned us of such a danger, *“Tis ye, ‘tis your estranged faces that miss the many splendored thing.”*

A thoughtful assessment of our daily rounds will highlight many pleasant moments and many positive stories that the newspapers would not deem newsworthy. As it is on the local scene, so it is on the worldwide stage. In the daily life of towns and villages of this world, there is a struggle to raise higher the line between goodness and evil that abounds in ordinary, everyday hearts.

Recently I joined the check-out queue at our small, local supermarket. A lady, wearing the wreath of her years, was fumbling with her purse when the assistant, having packed her bag, said, *“Madam. may I have your car keys?”* Those standing in line wondered why he wanted her car keys. The young man then took the lady’s arm, accompanied her out to the car, placed her shopping in the back seat, gave her keys and returned to serve customers amid much appreciation of his kindness. *“Should be more of that”* said the burley character behind me.

On exiting I noticed a young man sitting begging. His unkempt appearance and haggard looks signalled that in the throw of Life’s dice, he was obviously down on his luck. As I felt for some coins to give him, another gentleman stopped, spoke to him kindly and then said, *“I have only one dollar, but here it is. I am bound to find another at home.”*

If we could but highlight the abounding goodness that pervades the world around us, we would have the power to eliminate so many of the world’s evils. The great Russian novelist, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, recognised this struggle for universal goodness.

“It was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirring of the good. Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, not between classes, not between political parties either, but right through every human heart.”

There are plenty of examples to encourage us: the unpaid army of volunteers assisting in famine relief; the heroic efforts of those involved in the rescue of the trapped boys in a Thai cave; the separation of the conjoined Bhutanese twin girls in July; the unselfish and comforting work of nurses in our hard-pressed hospitals; the dedication and caring service of teachers in our schools; the burdens shouldered by parents for the wellbeing of their children. All this goodness is so much grist to our everyday mills and should be enough food for a meal of encouragement and optimistic hope.

This focusing in on good is not an act of ignoring the evil that exists. It is simply readjusting, so we can maintain a healthy balance that uplifts and encourages rather than one which demeans and demoralizes; an exercise in Christian optimism and hope. The prophet Isaiah proclaims, *“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace.”*

It is indeed a very Christian thing to focus on the goodness that abounds all around us, and then to value this goodness as *“we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*



Editor

Frank Freeman SDB,
editor of the Australian
Salesian Bulletin

The most splendid and precious money I have ever seen



Fr Ángel Fernández Artime

Ángel Fernández Artime is the 10th successor of Don Bosco and the first Spaniard and third non-Italian to become Rector Major of the Salesian Order.

My dear readers of the Salesian Bulletin,

I greet you warmly again and, this time, with special joy on account of what I want to share with you.

During the Christmas Season one of the members of the General Council, the one for the Missions, was able to spend Christmas with two very significant presences of ours in Uganda. In one of these there is a large group of children whom we have rescued from the streets and now live in our Salesian House. The second is our refugee camp in Palabek, Uganda, where he arrived on 31 January 2018.

Our General Councilor for the Missions, Don Guillermo Basañes, gave me two envelopes. One comes from Kampala, Uganda, from the educational project "Children and Life Mission," and the other from the Palabek refugee camp. Inside each envelope, there was a brief message.

The children rescued from the streets and living in Don Bosco Boys Home, together with some churches in their neighbourhood, took up a collection to send to me. They asked me to use it for the poorest people whom I meet around the world (as if they themselves are not poor!). Inside, I found \$100, the fruit of the generosity and sacrifice of these people and these boys.

The other envelope was just like the first. That one came, as I said above, from the refugee camp. The people there practically have no money, and generally barter with food and animals, etc. For example, some raise half a dozen chicks, allow them to fatten up a little, and then exchange them for other foodstuffs. This gives them just enough to survive; but when asked to give help to those who are poor, hundreds and hundreds of persons got going and took up a huge collection. They sold some chicks for coins and then added to that amount what they were able to collect at the various Masses celebrated under the open sky and trees.

I opened the envelope with great emotion and found \$25 and two coins therein (one of 100 shillings; the other of 200 shillings) with a note asking me to give this money to those who need it most. I was alone in my office at the time and was unable to contain my emotions. This was such a touching and special moment that I just could not keep it to myself. For this reason, I immediately thought of sharing it with you. You know that I already have shared with you something like this when the Gospel passage came to mind wherein Jesus pointed out to His disciples the poor widow who had put all she had – two coins – into the treasury in the Temple in Jerusalem and how the Lord praised her for her generosity because it was authentic. This is what I see in these two donations – in that \$125.00 – the most precious ones that I have ever received in my life.

This made me stop and ponder over the human heart. There is such beautiful humanity in our hearts. Lamentably, it seems that the world can put before our eyes only bad news and threats from which we need to protect ourselves. But this is not so - the human heart is much greater than that. There is not only bad news!

I hope to make it known that just as many good things happen each day. I also want to rescue from oblivion all the good that is done anonymously in the world each day. And I ask that the Salesians and the entire Salesian Family throughout the world please make known how much good is being done everywhere – not just by us but by many persons, groups, and institutions. We must make the good known, to make it visible. For if we do not, only what is evil and egotistical is seen and known – but only for the selfish interests of a few.

I still have not had the chance to meet the refugees in Palabek personally. I do not know if I will ever be able to go there in person, but, through my Salesian brethren, I have sent my thanks and my word that we shall not forget them and that they, too, are very important.

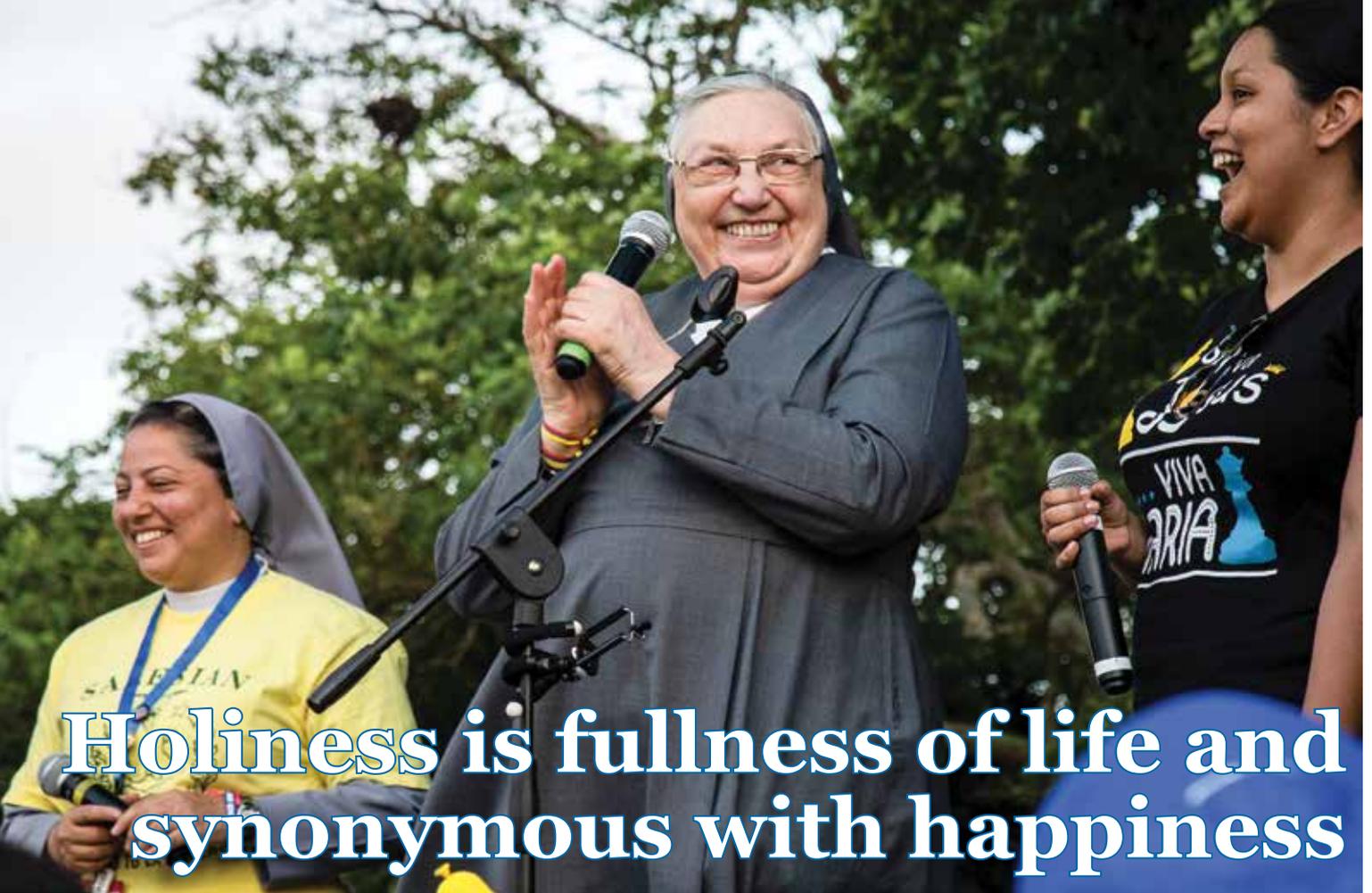
Simple gestures such as these that I have just shared with you give us ever greater hope for humankind. They lead me to give thanks to our good God for the very many beautiful things that happen each day. They also make me think that good intentions and nice words are not enough to change the realities of injustice and marginalization. This challenges me and many of us – and who knows, maybe you, too, dear readers – not to be passive and conformist but to shine with the Light of Christ and be critical in the face of what “others” want to make us believe, or feel, often through fear tactics.

I send my greetings from here in Rome to the people, families and children of Palabek and Kampala. I am certain that your messages and your gestures will reach much further than you imagine. I promise you that those \$125.00 have not only left an indelible memory in my heart but that they will also reach there where they are most needed. The people who are the beneficiaries of those donations will know the immense value of the gift, due to its origin, having been given with such great generosity.

With much affection.

Don Angel





Holiness is fullness of life and synonymous with happiness

At the beginning of the new year, we welcome with joy and gratitude the comment of Strenna 2019 that the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, presented at the Generalate on 27 December. This annual event brought a breath of Salesian and ecclesial air to all of us, thanks to the enthusiasm and depth with which the theme was presented to us:

“That my joy may be in you” (Jn 15:11)

HOLINESS ALSO FOR YOU

The Strenna is like a wakeup call to keep us alert and in full harmony with what Pope Francis writes in the Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et exultate*. The Strenna intends to highlight the ‘least visible treasure of holiness’, that of ‘next door holiness’ as Pope Francis calls it. Holiness is not a word frequently used by young people, but it is desired because of the profound yearning of every person: to reach that horizon of transcendence and fullness that we all carry in our hearts, believers and non-believers alike. The proposal of holiness, the Rector Major emphasizes, is addressed to everyone: adults and young people. For Christians in particular, holiness is fullness of life and synonymous with happiness, the beatitude that challenges every woman and every man of today and in all situations of life.

I am sure, that reading, reflecting on, and sharing the Strenna with the educating community will be a good opportunity to discover that holiness generates life and hope. The Lord asks us for everything and what He offers us is true life, the happiness for which He created us. He wants us to be saints and has very high expectations in our regard. He does not want us to settle for mediocrity, for an inconsistent and watered-down existence. No, He wants us to be saints and saints willing, at any cost, to embody the vocation to holiness in the current context, with its challenges and its risks.

I would like to particularly dwell on the second part of the Strenna, which bears the title: Jesus is happiness. I consider it significant for the real aspirations in all of us and the many young people described as ‘restless dreamers’, because I think they want something that is great, beautiful, true. It is a restlessness that also affects us as adults so that we will help them to dream big with courage and determination.



Mother Yvonne Reungoat

Mother Yvonne Reungoat is the 9th successor of St Maria Mazzarello and is French, making her the first non-Italian to be elected as Superior General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians

It is a page of profound evangelical spirituality interpreted with Salesian sensibility. It presents a brief overview of the wonderful messages launched to young people by St John Paul II: "It is Jesus whom you seek when you dream of happiness." And Benedict XVI: "Dear young people, the happiness you seek, the happiness you are entitled to enjoy has a name, a face: that of Jesus of Nazareth... Let yourself be surprised by Christ! Give him the 'right to speak to you'." And Pope Francis with great sincerity emphasizes that happiness is not negotiable: "Your happiness is priceless and it is not sold; it is not an 'app' that you download on your phone".

Holiness is not the privilege of a few, but is a right of everyone. Every human being as such, says Pope Francis, has the right to live and be happy. Studying the Strenna in its richness raises many questions that we welcome as a valuable gift. Do we believe it is possible to walk towards the goal of holiness and consider it a "vocation, a responsibility, a commitment, a gift"?

Do we ask the Lord with confidence to reach the degree of holiness that He has always planned for each of us? Do we allow the invitation to be holy as God is holy to resound in us?

I am convinced that if we were all firmly oriented towards this high goal of life, our realities would show more clearly the union of hearts, the contagious joy that radiates and reaches the young and the poorest youth, the vulnerable and forgotten, and even those searching for authentic happiness, for the meaning of an existence worthy of the person who is a child of God. Our happiness is to see the young happy: is this not so?

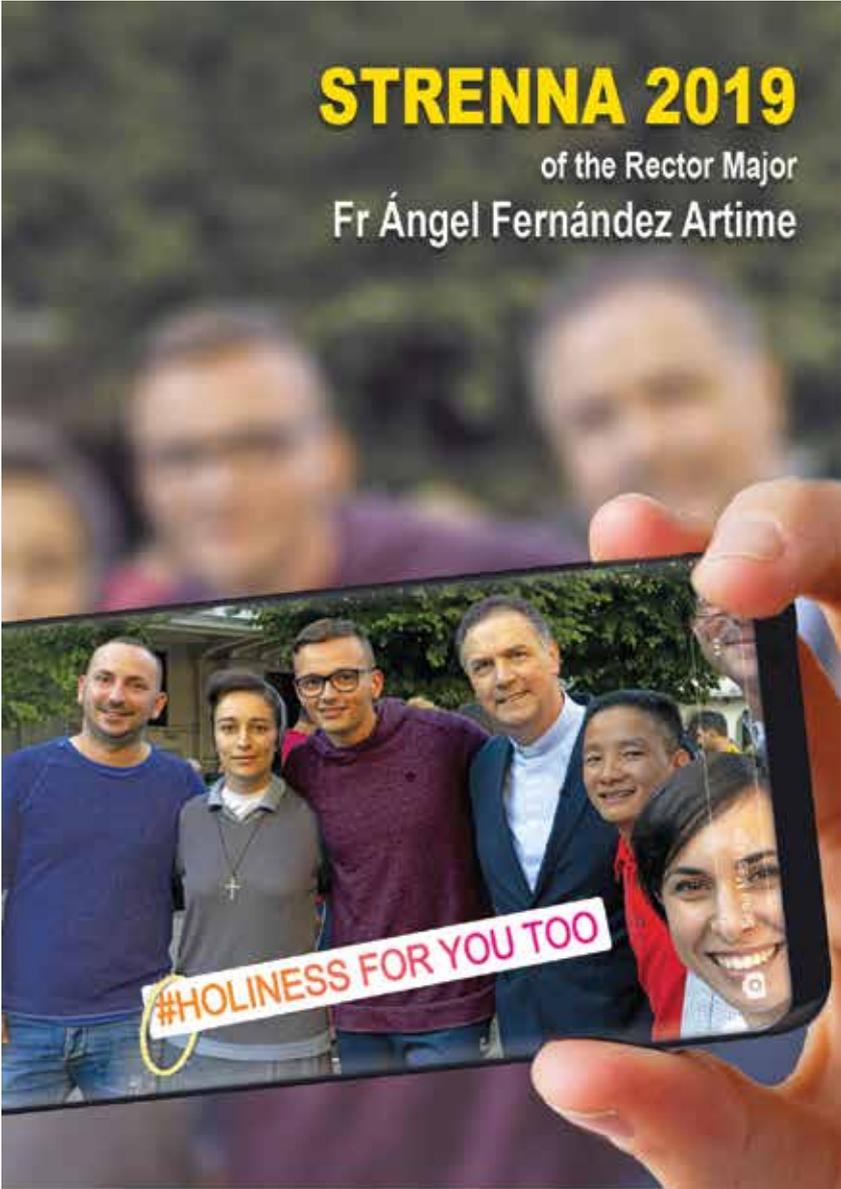
Holiness and happiness are two inseparable values; they cannot be separated from each other. For us, it is a daily call to "live for the glory of God by our service for the evangelization of young people, walking with them on the path to holiness".

I conclude by wishing you, the educating communities, your young people, and your families a happy new year 2019, grateful for the holiness that enriches the Church and our great Family.

God bless you!

Mother Yvonne Reungoat

Rome 1 January 2019



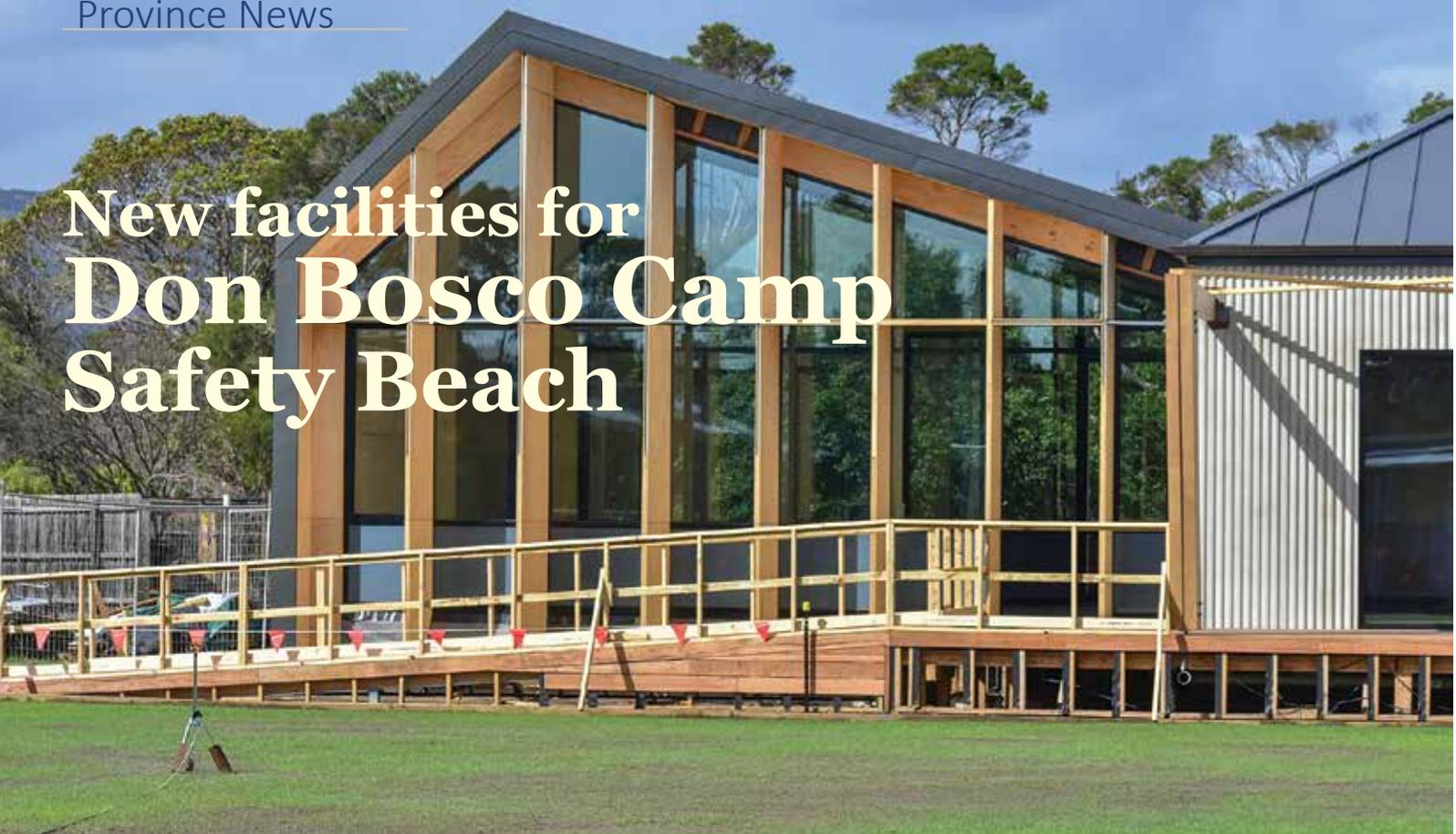
STRENNA 2019
of the Rector Major
Fr Ángel Fernández Artime

**HOLINESS
IS
HAPPINESS**

"So that my joy may be in you"
(John 15: 11)

 Salesians of Don Bosco
Australia-Pacific

New facilities for Don Bosco Camp Safety Beach



Years of planning and construction finally came to a head on Sunday the 2nd of December 2018 as the Don Bosco Camp and Centre in Safety Beach celebrated the grand opening of its new buildings. These new buildings will be instrumental in allowing the camp and centre evolve its mission further; adding a range of new services to its repertoire, such as catering for a full school year level, or more niche interests such band or sports camps.

Bunurong Elder Uncle Shane Clarke officially opened the day's events at 10:30am with a Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony, explaining that the three different types of leaf used represented mothers, current mob and children respectively. "When they are fused together through smoke, it is very significant" he said; past present and future are brought together as one. Incidentally, it was also a very apt description of the group gathered; around 200 people of all ages attended the day, some who had been to the camp 30 years ago, some who still frequently came to the campsite and still more who are yet to reach the age old enough for camp!

Afterwards, the group made its way into the shiny, unscuffed gymnasium, which had been set up to host Mass, led by provincial Fr Will Matthews. In his homily, he spoke fondly of his own experiences as a young brother who was still learning English and had been reluctantly sent to the beach-side camp during a cold and wet winter, only to come to understand just how special the place is. "When I came down I was a bit depressed and didn't know what to expect... but while I was down here, when I was here for camp, I had the best time of my life. I made so many new friends, and I learnt so much from my new friends."

The Mass was a beautiful expression of thanksgiving; the acoustics of the new room greatly amplified the already stunning beauty that Bronwyn Dean and her extended band had brought into the mix. As the ceremony ended, Fr Will and Fr Bernie Graham (Chair of the Camp and Centre Board) both expressed their thanks to a range of stakeholders. They then blessed the buildings with branches that had been broken from a local tree

With the formalities completed, the festivities began in earnest with lunch in the form of a barbeque feast put on by camp chef Suzie Burns, Assistant manager Dom Stephens, Ellen Hogbin and camp handyman Tom Steele. Unfortunately, previous manager Steph Wood could not make it to the day. However, her presence was certainly felt; she had put in a massive effort to begin, plan and oversee the beginning phases of construction.

The day then took on the feel of a festival as live-music, games, jumping castles, arts and craft, face painting and dancing were on offer for all participants as they wished, ran and organized by the camp's Youth Leaders. Tours of the new buildings were available all day, showing off the spectacular new gymnasium, chapel, multi-purpose hall, conference room and offices. In true Don Bosco spirit, not even could sudden rain dampen the spirits, as the fun, joy and laughter echoed around the camp grounds.

Current Manager Paul Poutney was very impressed with how the day's proceedings had been. "This was an amazing opportunity for everyone who feels a real connection to the camp to be present and enjoy each other's company one more time; life-long bonds have been made on these grounds." He also reiterated what Fr Will and Fr Bernie had said, thanking "the current full-time staff and its wonderful volunteers who give so often so much of their time for the betterment of other people; and most significantly, young people."



Fr Bernie Graham, Chair of the Camp Board, blessing the new buildings



*Welcome to Country
and Smoking
Ceremony lead by
Bunurong Elder Uncle
Shane Clarke*

2019 Salesian pilgrimage World Youth Day



A 16 hour plane ride that leaves at 7:40am but then also lands at 6:10am on the same day albeit in a foreign land is enough to take the wind out of anyone's sails. However, for our group of 22 pilgrims, fearlessly led by Romina Martiniello and Lauren Hichaaba on our way to Panama for World Youth Day, this simply wasn't an option! As the group filed into the St Joseph Salesian Retreat Centre in Los Angeles, USA, the scent of a freshly cooked breakfast feast filled their nostrils – and the whirlwind adventures began for real!

As it turns out, a powerful remedy for jetlag is Salesian spirit; it keeps you awake, alert and enthusiastic! You wouldn't have known that this group had received minimal sleep for an extended period of time as they bounced around the different Salesian works in LA – parishes dedicated to ethnic minority cultures, primary schools, secondary schools, technical schools and youth centres. The joy and energy that was buzzing through these works created a loop, sustaining the group's energy!

Our magnificent hosts, guides and paparazzi – Gina Robles, Br Al and Andres Neria – did an incredible job of making us feel welcome in Los Angeles, as well as explaining just how meaningful the work being undertaken there is, within the current social, economic and political climates. There was also a little bit of time to explore the famed city and indulge a little in North American culture. We had a tour of Hollywood, did some shopping (although mostly at Salesian school uniform shops!), participated in cultural eating (i.e. fast food!), as well as we had free time to explore on our own – some went to a basketball game, some explored the Venice Beach boardwalk, some visited the futuristic-looking city Cathedral, while others still visited Harry Potter at the Universal Studios.



Some of the Melbourne-based members of the Salesian Pilgrimage bumped into their new Archbishop, Peter Comensoli

In what felt like a blink of an eye, we hit our last night in Los Angeles, which was also the most beautiful. Having united with the pilgrims from the USA West Salesian province for a commissioning Mass said by our very own Fr Will Matthews, we then participated in a round table discussion, introducing ourselves, explaining what we were looking forward to at WYD and, of course, sharing a meal together!

After a very early wakeup, it was none other than Pope Francis who welcomed us at Panama City airport; giant posters of him were all around the terminal. For those who had experienced a World Youth Day before, this was a little unusual; normally the host city didn't get quite that on board with hundreds of thousands of people pouring in and clogging the place, although it didn't stop there! Throughout the

duration of WYD, from start to finish, it was almost impossible to walk anywhere in the city without any of the incredibly friendly locals saying hi, waving their hands, honking their horns or stopping their cars in the middle of the road to let you cross. Indeed, even some opened up their homes to the pilgrims walking by, allowing them to refill drink bottles and to even use the 'restrooms'! Whilst this WYD certainly wasn't as big as it had been in the past in terms of pure numbers, it's safe to say it was the biggest in terms of welcome and joy, given and received by the pilgrims and the residents of the city!

Typically, one of the highlights of World Youth Day has always been the "Salesian Day" in which just a handful of members of the group would be invited to a global conference on Salesianity in the morning. Then, in the afternoon, the rest of the group would arrive for the commencement of the Salesian party – a massive celebration of Salesianity transcending culture and language. Dancing, music, making friends, food, joy, games, laughter, conversation, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and a goodnight from the Rector Major and Mother General are always features. This year, it was just as incredible as it always is; in some ways, this entire World Youth Day was a celebration of Salesianity!

For many people in Central America, Don Bosco is an incredibly powerful figure – it's no surprise that he was selected to be one of the patrons of the event. In everything we did, across catechesis sessions, impromptu dance parties, welcome ceremonies, stations of the cross or merely just walking through the streets of Panama City, we would bump into Salesian groups or people with connections to the Salesians in one form or another. Indeed, Pope Francis mentioned Don Bosco numerous times throughout his speeches and homilies, most notably in his main address to youth of the world, during the Saturday night Vigil.

"We know well that to feel acknowledged or loved it is not enough to be connected all day long. To feel respected and asked to get involved is greater than simply being "on-line". It means finding spaces where, with your hands, your heart and your head, you can feel part of a larger community that needs you and that you yourselves, young people, need.

The saints understood this very well. I think, for example, of Saint John Bosco". (Just as at the mention of that name there was thunderous applause!) "Don Bosco did not go off to seek young people in far-off or special places; he simply learned to see with God's eyes everything that was going on around him in his city. Thus he was deeply affected by the hundreds of children and young people left to themselves, without education, without work and without the helping hand of a community. Many other people were living in the same city, and many criticized those young people, but they were unable to see them with God's eyes. We need to see young people with God's eyes. Don Bosco did... He gave them roots from which they could reach up to heaven".

World Youth Day is a truly global melting pot of immense crowds, culture, language and Catholicism that at times can be too intense to comprehend, or even cope with. So, to begin unpacking what we had collectively experienced, and to share what we had individually undergone, the group travelled to a remote part of Panama, the island paradise of Bocas Del. With the Pope's words still ringing in our ears, we gathered on the shores of the Caribbean Sea for small group discussions followed by one of the highlights of the entire trip. In such a magical setting, as the sun was sinking into the ocean, Fr Brian Ahern led us in a Mass that was beautiful in its simplicity and powerful in its authenticity. Days later, we were in San Jose for Don Bosco's feast day and so we discussed the gift of Don Bosco, and what that meant – and we weren't just discussing our patron, but continuing the World Youth Day experience and further exploring the Pope's message.

It can be hard to point to tangible things you get out of a World Youth Day experience. It isn't as simple as a moment of sudden conversion, an instant of clarity or a couple of days of warm feelings towards other people. Rather, what comes from the World Youth Day experience will grow in our pilgrims, and will manifest itself in all sorts of unexpected, wondrous ways. As Pope Francis is continually telling young people, their responsibility then, isn't to have this experience, or to allow something to grow within them for a little while; no, the World Youth Day challenge is to make the experience manifest in words, thoughts and actions for the rest of the pilgrims' lives, in all facets of their lives.

The chosen representatives of Australia at the global Salesian conference with Mother General Yvonne



Finding meaning amongst the tides of time



Micheal Gartland

Michael is a journalist and member of the Bulletin's editorial team. He is already planning ahead for the next time he can add "Foreign Correspondent" to that list!

I've seen and done many of very different things since the summer edition of the Bulletin. I've sweated out litres in the humidity of Phnom Penh. I've wiped snow from my moustache in New York City. I've visited ancient cities long abandoned. I've been to Mass with Pope Francis. I've met more people than I'm able to remember. I've been disillusioned by the extreme wealth I've seen. I've been inspired by the perseverance of the poor.

My brother and I spent a day cycling around the remains of the ancient city of Angkor, Cambodia. Before the industrial revolution, it was the most populous city in the world, a sprawling metropolis of up to a million people. Eventually however, it was abandoned as a result of wars with neighbours, shifting political and economic currents and other such factors. Nowadays, all a visitor sees are the stone-based structures – walls, pools and a plethora of temples. Oh, and an expansive rainforest. There is wild-tree growth everywhere, outside buildings, inside them, on top of them and even through them. We were sitting on the thick root of a tree on top of what used to be the 5 metre high defensive wall at the outer extremity of the city when I had a sudden realization. Looking out from the wall, what would have once been a wide open plain as far as the eye could see, was now a forest, the canopy thick enough to block sunlight from reaching the ground.

A couple of weeks later and I was hiking through another forest, on the west coast of the USA. There was a chill in the air and a gentle fog. As I was walking past countless trees that were well over 100 metres tall, I came upon a sign explaining that the tree in front of me was at least 900 years old, possibly older. That is to say, that while this tree was a mere sapling, on the other side of the world, the Khmer empire at Angkor was just hitting its peak, as some of the biggest temples in the world were being erected. Incredible.

Later that week I found myself in the world-renowned Yosemite Valley. A majestic place, full of incredible natural beauty, heavily populated by waterfalls, pine trees, sheer granite cliff faces, squirrels, bobcats, deer and bears. I was lucky in that my arrival was just days before an expected snowstorm, so that the trails were still accessible, yet also not too heavily populated by other tourists! As I came to one section of the path, I saw a pile of boulders with what looked like the potential for a great view, so I climbed up to the top and sat down on a boulder.

Now this boulder wasn't just a big rock, it was a genuine boulder; enormous! At least the size of a double storey house, both in height and depth. As I was sitting there, about 20 meters off the ground of the valley, I looked up and saw these great two granite slabs, one on each side of the valley, hundreds and hundreds of meters off the ground. When I craned my neck and looked directly upwards, I noticed what almost looked like a crater in the side of the cliff face. I realized that the boulder I was sitting on was at one point a kilometre higher than it is now – still attached to the cliff face and unaffected by the unrelenting ravages caused by gravity and flowing water.

I had two full days at Yosemite, but I was staying at a hostel about an hour away via the public bus system; so I woke up at 5:30, to make sure I could get the first service and spend as much time in the park as possible. As I was walking towards the bus stop and left the lights of the hostel's carpark, I assumed I would struggle to see anything before the sunrise, so I had my torch at the ready. And yet, as I kept walking further from the lights, I became aware of more and more stars, millions of them, more than I had seen before, more than could be counted in a lifetime. The area was quite rural, so with almost no light pollution it got to the point where there were fewer dark spots than there were shiny spots in the night sky. Craning my head to try and take as much of it in as possible, this night sky was completely alien to the one I'm used to in Melbourne. I was unaccustomed to the northern constellations. A thought suddenly came to me: our lives, the things we do, the things we can achieve are completely and utterly, and incomprehensibly meaningless!



In Angkor, there were faces carved into the stonework that had very little meaning for me, until the guide explained that the emperor at the time also fancied himself as a god and so, commissioned hundreds of statues of himself. Throughout parts of the redwood forest, there had been people who had spray painted their names onto the trees and rocks. In Yosemite, there had been people who had scratched their and their partner's name surrounded by a love heart on some of the rocks. All of these were attempts to beat the temporariness of life by attaching to something that will last longer. But the forest reclaims, trees rot, granite falls, and even stars burn out; there is no true meaning to be found in trying to escape the physical parameters of our lives.

As apocalyptic as all this sounds, coming to this realization wasn't a burden or a surrender into meaninglessness; in fact, the opposite is true – I felt a great sense of freedom, and of peace. Tus far, he journey I was on was full of meaning for me. There was the moment in Taiwan airport on my way to North America when a Brisbane mother was caught attending to the needs of her two young children and spilt her drink all over self, which got us all having a great conversation about the trip they were returning from.

And there was that day I shared with my brother, as we spent 10 hours alternating between cycling and exploring ancient ruins, climbing steep staircases and laughing the whole way. I hadn't ridden a bike in years and wasn't sure how I'd survive in terms of fitness and avoiding a crash but I made it to the end of the day dodging and weaving trucks, tuk tuks and mopeds in the city streets like it was all I had been doing for the past 10 years!

In Vancouver, I was on my way to the bus terminal with all my luggage, to take an international bus. I was crossing a 6 lane bridge, when I noticed a grizzly-looking man pushing an overly loaded shopping trolley full of gear along. As I drew closer, he started wobbling and sat down. Panicking a bit, not sure of what to do and without a mobile phone, I approached him, and asked if he needed help. He sort of slurred that he'd be fine, that everything was okay and given that I had a strict deadline to meet, I continued on. As I strode towards the terminal, increasingly worried that I could have done more, should have done more, I happened to pass a police car; I alerted them to the incident and continued on my way.

There was the moment when I was asleep, enjoying a pleasant dream when all of a sudden I was woken by a hand clawing at my shoulder. Still groggy, I could feel myself being lifted up off the ground and sat on chair, as blurry faces and voices looked at me, asking if I was okay. Abruptly, there was a movement in the room and I could hear the Our Father being recited – that's when I realized I was attending Mass! I had passed out whilst kneeling, from the heat perhaps, and now had a lovely bruise on my cheekbone to show where I hit the chair in front! Yet the contingent of parishioners around me momentarily forgot the service, as they offered water, soggy tea towels and snacks. After Mass, I was ushered into the narthex for morning tea, coffee and a closer examination; by that point I was feeling fine, the biggest task in front of me was reassuring everyone I would be fine and thanking them for the care and concern!

There was the moment in Yosemite Valley where I had gone to the Mass service that I found on Google, only to be just the fifth person in the room but no priest. Everything that unfolded from thereon was exactly what that famous line "When two or more of you gather in my name, there I am too" refers to: after the service a couple of them struck up conversation with me, asking me about where I was from, what I

was doing and so on. We chatted as if we had known each other for years – and I'm not usually one for prolonged conversations with people I've just met! Eventually, I mentioned that I was planning on going on a specific trail; abruptly the conversation moved from friendly casual to heightened concern; parts of that trail were icy at that time of year and I was alone and there were no park rangers at the moment, it would be a dangerous path, life-threatening even. In the end, Dolores, who I had known for all of about 15 minutes, made me promise that I would e-mail her the very second I got back because otherwise, search parties would be going out after me!

Then there was the time, when I spent a day exploring an island with two very good friends, one of whom had, without warning, hired a golf buggy! We spent the day driving along shorelines, gravel paths and roads, stopped to look at monkeys and rock pools, to swim in the beach. We chatted and we laughed, we lost some of our belongings but then found them when we doubled back later on. It was a few hours of perfect, pure, innocent, carefree fun where there were none of the worries or plans for the future that cloud the present moment that normally accompanies life.

I relate these specific incidents and could have added a couple more, because, believe it or not, there is a common thread that links them all together. Importantly, these moments all directly involved other people (as opposed to just being present in stunning locations) but there is something less tangible as well. In the immediate aftermath of all of them, as I was walking to my boarding gate, as I gingerly cleaned my clothes and aching body, as I walked into the terminal, as I walked out of the church into the freezing air, as I made my way toward the ominous trail and as we got off the golf buggy outside the hostel, I could feel my heart soar, and an unstoppable happiness surface that became manifest on my face, in my shoulders, in my gait.

Now, on the surface, during some of these moments I was at my worst, in some I was at my best. Some of them were mundane, some were extraordinary. Each time I could feel my heart soar, and unstoppable grin wash over my face, I was consciously aware of the 'other' – each of these moments was an experience with this other. It is in the exact moment that we let go of our self-focus to encounter others, in helping, or allowing ourselves to be helped, in sharing or allowing ourselves to be shared with, that we find true meaning. Our lives are brief and yet, in the scheme of things, just as brief as the grand empires, or the imposing forests, or the breathtaking mountains. To try to beat the tides of time is a fool's game, yet in this briefness there is room for a profound appreciation of all things exactly because of this briefness. Our time is so brief, yet it can be populated by immensely powerful moments, if we can only transition from the focus on our self, to an engagement with the other selves all around us.



St John Bosco in the Pacific Islands



Salesians in the Pacific Delegation have many reasons to joyfully celebrate in 2019! The spirit of St John Bosco descended upon Samoa in 1979, making this year the 40th anniversary. The island now boasts an ever-expanding secondary school that now also provides technical education on top of its secondary education in Savaii, a technical college that offers hands-on trades education to many young men in Apia, and three vibrant parishes across Samoa where Salesians minister to the spiritual needs of the faithful.

Salesians have also been in Suva, Fiji, for 20 years. They came to establish a formation house to provide initial formation to young Salesians from around the Pacific and Australia. They have been great contributors to the local Church as well as serving the academic needs at the Pacific Regional Seminary in Suva, Fiji.

With the support of the Rector Major and the Australia-Pacific Province, a new parish was established in Nasinu, Suva, in 2018 with Fr Mika Leilua appointed as its first parish priest.

On the feast of Don Bosco, celebrations took place at St Joseph's school hall, next to the designated site of the new St John Bosco parish church in Nasinu. The Eucharist was led by the provincial Fr Will Matthews and concelebrated by all the Salesians in Fiji, together with a number of local clergy. Despite the wet weather on a weekday evening, the hall was packed with a large number of parishioners, devotees and many religious friends of the Salesians.



During the homily, Fr Will invited the faithful to have absolute faith in God, like Don Bosco, and not to worry about anything but to be happy in God. Following the homily, Novice Afia Anosa made his First Profession, witnessed by his novice master Fr Jim Hoe and the rector Fr Pselio Tavaga.

Br Stan Rossato, who is a member of the Suva Community and celebrates 50 years of Salesian religious profession this year, also renewed his vows during the Eucharist. On behalf of the Church and the Salesian Congregation, Fr Will Matthews thanked Br Stan for his dedicated and joyous service. Br Stan also thanked the gathering for their support and prayers.

Immediately after the Eucharist, the new parish centre was blessed and opened by the Provincial. Fr Mika Leilua now resides in this new home, while overseeing the construction of the new Education and Youth Centre which aims to help the youth of the area, and to cater to the pastoral and spiritual needs of the faithful.

A traditional Fijian kava ceremony was held after the blessing during which the Salesians were thanked by the local chiefs for their service and leadership at Nasinu in Suva, Fiji.

**Fr William
Matthews
SDB**

*Fr Will is the Provincial
of the Australia-Pacific
Province which includes
Australia, Samoa, Fiji
and New Zealand*

JUBILEE ANNIV



Br Silvio Quaranta
75 years of Religious Profession

16 August 1944
Borgo San Martino, Italy



Fr James Adayadiel
65 years of Religious Profession

24 May 1954
Yercaud, India



Fr Lionel Henry
65 years of Religious Profession

24 May 1954
Yercaud, India



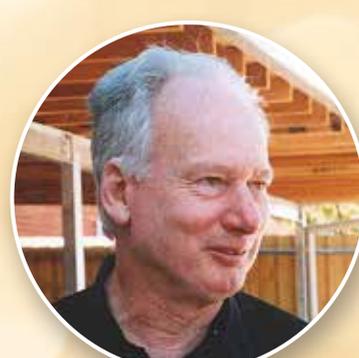
Fr Bert Fulbrook
60 years of Religious Profession

March 1959
Lower Plenty, Australia



Fr Greg Chambers
50 years of Religious Profession

31 January 1969
Lysterfield, Australia



Fr John Prest
50 years of Religious Profession

31 January 1969
Lysterfield, Australia



Br Stan Rossato
50 years of Religious Profession

31 January 1969
Lysterfield, Australia



Fr Peter Rankin
40 years of Religious Profession

31 January 1979
Lysterfield, Australia

ANNIVERSARIES 2019



Fr Stephen Dubovsky
60 years of Ordination

5 July 1959
Melchet Court, England



Fr Nick Castelyns
50 years of Ordination

27 December 1969
Rotterdam, Netherlands



Fr Jim Acreman
40 years of Ordination

26 May 1979
East Bentleigh, Australia



Fr Peter Monaghan
40 years of Ordination

26 May 1979
East Bentleigh, Australia



Fr Joe Lee
25 years of Ordination

16 September 1994
Engadine, Australia



Fr Mosese Tui
25 years of Ordination

3 December 1994
Alafua, Samoa

Ordination to the Diaconate in Melbourne



On Saturday 1 December, Matthew Kitichai (Jack) Saisawang was ordained to the Diaconate by Archbishop Tim Costelloe SDB, Archbishop of Perth, Australia, at St Joseph's Church, Collingwood in Melbourne, Australia.

Deacon Jack is a member of the Thai Province and currently a member of the International Studentate community at Don Bosco House, Clifton Hill, undertaking his Theological studies in Melbourne.



It was a wonderful, joyous Salesian celebration with many young people present, fantastic music led by Br Nattawut Kitsawat SDB (also from the Thai Province) and the Salesian choir, and an inspiring homily from Archbishop Tim weaving together the theme of 'Service' from the Advent Season and the Novena of the Feast of the Immaculate Mary, followed by a fabulous festive meal.

Present at the celebration from Thailand were the Provincial of the Thai Province, Fr Dhepharut Pitisan SDB, as well as Deacon Jack's mother Juliana Phaimanee Saisawang and his novitiate companion Brother Sarapan Kaesar SDB.



In addition to the many friends and Salesian Family members, a wonderful feature of the celebration was the presence of 65 SYM Leaders who were in Melbourne for their annual Leaders Camp. This ordination brought the number of Deacons in the Clifton Hill community to five – Thai Province (2), Timor-Leste Province (2) and China Province (1), but only for a very short time as three return to their home provinces in the coming days, having completed their studies in Melbourne – Dc Anusit Chanphen (THA), Dc Abilio Guterres (TLS) and Dc Lourenco Soares (TLS).

Priestly ordination of Fr Anusit Chanphen SDB



Salesian Bishop Joseph Prathan, of the diocese of Surat Thani, ordained Anusit Chanphen to the priesthood at St Therese's Church in the Salesian parish of Hua Hin, Thailand, on Saturday 19 January. This beautiful new church was packed with members of his own family as well as members of the Salesian family, young and old, from all over Thailand for the occasion.

Phil Gleeson, Bernie Graham and Tristan O'Brien travelled from Australia to be present, and Por Kitsawad and Daniel Rafanomezantsoa (who are both home in Thailand and Cambodia for the Summer) from the Clifton Hill community were also present. Past members of the Clifton Hill community Fr Monthon Rojanasutadkul, Fr Chien Kongtrakoondee, Fr John Seesawan, Fr Ronnie Mathavabhandhu and Fr Charles Arun were also present as were Sr Suwalee and Sr Rin, both members of the Salesian Family in Thailand who studied in Melbourne in recent years. Fr Anusit celebrated his Mass of Thanksgiving on Sunday 20 January, also in Hua Hin.



Salesian Summer Camps

Salesian Summer camps are a proud tradition that trace their origins back to the days when Don Bosco and his boys would pack their knapsacks for summer, and walk from town to town spreading music, cheer, joy and hope. Today, while these camps may appear to be quite different, the end result is the same: young people return to their homes recharged with the exuberance of youthful energy, ready to spread cheer, joy, hope and love to their families and friends.

Salesian Youth Camp WA

The WA Young Salesian Camp celebrates 30 years



The Western Australian Young Salesian Camp was special this year for one extra reason – it was the 30th anniversary of the camp, celebrated by 110 campers (aged between 12 and 15) and 21 leaders.

In the first few weeks of January each year, like-minded youth from around the diocese gather at the Nanga Bush Camp in Dwellingup for five days of fun, joy, laughter, games and activities. Over the course of the camp, the campers are able to disconnect from their smartphones and other pressing technologies, allowing them to develop in other areas; something that Camp Coordinator Graham Maher believes is a rarity for young people.

“Many began the camp shy and reserved but as the days went by a transformation took place,” he said. “The camp integrates the mission of Don Bosco to cater for youth by blending Christian living via the two Masses held during the week with fun, laughter and activities galore!”

Armadale Parish Priest, Fr Joseph Tran, celebrated Mass on the Monday and Thursday afternoons, using the examples of the Good Samaritan and Don Bosco to highlight the importance of being a good neighbour and showing love to others.

*By Olivia Bunter
The Record*

Girls' Salesian Summer Camp South Australia

Salesians building happiness with gratitude!



Meals are an important part of any great holiday and Summer camps are no different! During the planning and preparation phase, Anna Lobegeiger, our volunteer Camp Co-ordinator, and I reached out for donations of food to help lower camp costs. To one local company I made a request for five dozen eggs. I was blown away by their reply:

“Sixty eggs, that’s only one egg each over six days! I think a minimum of three eggs each would be a better place to start. Could you consider having hot breakfast one morning? Also thank you and all the volunteers that work so tirelessly to make these important camps happen.”

I didn’t expect such generosity let alone gratitude being expressed to us in response to our request for a donation!

Later on in the camp, as I was about to bite into a ‘hamburger with the lot’ (featuring a delicious donated egg!), I looked across the table to see a camper’s joy-filled face. In that instant I recalled something the Camp Co-ordinator had asked me just moments before: “Do you think we could send photo cards of gratitude in place of postcards of gratitude for food donations?” To bring to life the gift of gratitude for the gifts we have received, God links a camp co-ordinator’s thought, an administrator’s knowledge, a photographer’s talent and a hungry camper’s joyful face.

Midway through our six-day Girls’ camp, Fr Michael Ledda joined the 44 campers to say Mass. In his homily, he asked each of us to think about reasons

for being grateful. Later, we came to the spontaneous prayers of the faithful and, inspired by his words no doubt, the first to speak was Jade, a 10-year old on her first ever camp. She spoke up, giving thanks for the opportunity to come to camp, thanks for the feeling of being so lovingly welcomed into a place filled with new friends and so much fun.

Mentoring young camp leaders is something not often spoken about. In the Salesian Youth Network SA, we have a leader-buddy system, whereby each junior leader (16-17 yo) is paired to lead with a senior leader (18 yo or older) throughout all the activities during the summer camp. This shared experience of leading often reveals hidden potential within the junior leader. No wonder ‘God delights in his people’, for when we are lucky enough to witness that hidden potential come forth, we do too! Earlier this summer, during leadership development, we each explored our key strengths, giving rise to a new awareness of not only our own strengths, but a renewed appreciation of each other’s strengths as leaders in our team.

One of the new leaders this summer left a note in my ‘positive pocket’: “Thank you so much for supporting me as a new leader. I have enjoyed the experience and can’t wait to see you next year.”

It seems God had plans for everyone at camp this summer on the value and gift of gratitude – “So that my joy may be in you”. May the gift of gratitude and God’s joy continue to shine all year, just as it did in Jade. Truly, we are made in the image of God ... including one as young as 10 years old! I’m in awe: God is truly working through us, each bubbling with gratitude.



Jenny Myers

Jenny has co-ordinated the girls summer camps in South Australia for the past 27 years.

A tireless volunteer who gives up her own holidays every year to support and mentor young women on the Salesian camps

Salesian Summer Camps Safety Beach, Victoria



Stephanie Prigg

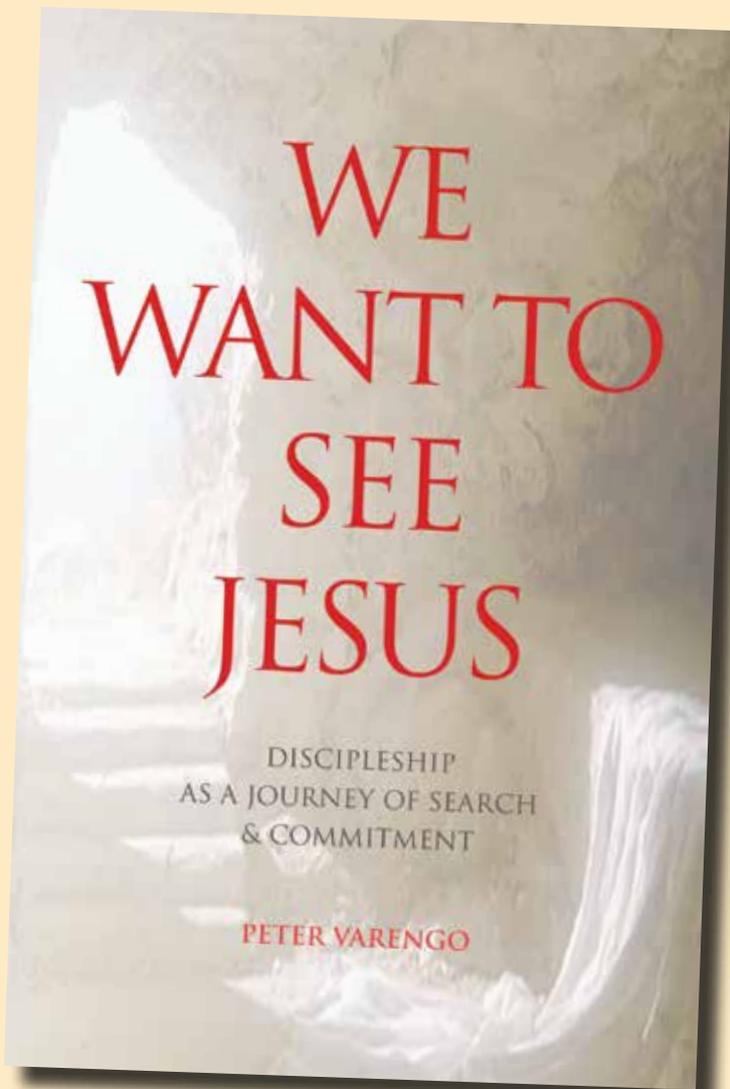
Steph is a long time volunteer leader at Don Bosco Camp, Safety Beach

As the new year arrived, so too did the excitement and exhilaration surrounding the Don Bosco Summer Camps in Safety Beach. On 7 January, the campsite was overrun by elated kids and enthusiastic leaders, as familiar bursts of laughter and buzz of “hellos” filled the air. The unique Salesian atmosphere of a Don Bosco Camp was once again alive throughout the entire site. The two junior camps and a senior camp all ran smoothly over the holidays and provided a fun and engaging break for hundreds of young people. The brilliant new facilities on camp enabled so many more spaces for fun and activities!

This summer, many of the older campers had reached the age when they could make their debut on camp as leaders, having attended their first Leadership Camp last December. Seeing the next generation of campers return to the community as leaders is such a special part of the camp – one of the proudest camp traditions! It is a great example of the culture of the camp; people receive so much personally that they are itching to be given the chance to give back to the community which has had such a profound experience in their lives.

On the first junior camp, we were also blessed to have had the presence of the five Cagliari Project volunteers for 2019, each making their own unique contribution to the camp. All of the Cagliari volunteers were greatly loved by the campers and their efforts were very much appreciated by the leaders. There was such beauty in sharing these days on camp with the Cagliari team; although we came from different areas of Salesian works, we were all united as the Salesian family we are.

As is always the way, the many happy hellos transition into immense joy as the days pass and, in last few hours of camp, transform into sad goodbyes. So many of the campers, many of which are still too young to be able (or allowed!) to keep in touch on social media, try to hold back the tears as they say goodbye to their new friends and pass through the gates of camp. However, there is one more transformation that goes on; soon, as the winter camp approaches, eager anticipation builds for the chance to be reunited with the incredibly special and ever-expanding Don Bosco Camp family!



Peter Varengo is a Salesian priest presently engaged in full-time Adult Retreat Ministry in Australia. He studied theology at the Salesian University in Rome; and Religious Education at Maynooth (Ireland) and at Boston College (USA). He has taught at Catholic Theological College in Melbourne and been involved in parish ministry for many years. His previous books are *Seed among the Vines*, *Salt of the Earth*, *Light of the World* and *Healing Presence*.

We want to see Jesus

Discipleship as a journey of search & commitment

The Gospels are full of references to people who were drawn to Jesus, usually to listen and to learn; sometimes to be healed of whatever prevented fullness of life, sometimes to challenge his authority, mostly because of the power of his teaching and the simple message of God's love that he preached.

The six chapters in this book reflect deeply on six incidents in his life recorded in Scripture. Each begins with a simple encounter but leads to an exploration into what it really meant to see Jesus, not only for them but for all who claim to be his disciples.

We Want to See Jesus is an invitation to be surprised by the experience, to be called from preconceived expectations, to see reality from a new perspective, to encounter the challenge of experiencing the presence of God in our lives.

Peter Varengo asserts that when we read and tell these stories of 'seeing Jesus', we are not simply retelling the stories - disciples curious about the identity of Jesus - but acting them out in our daily lives. So we identify with Mary searching for a dead body in an empty tomb (chapter 1), we are the woman by the well of Samaria, engaged, despite ourselves, in conversation with a stranger (chapter 2). We are Martha and Mary, in danger of being so focused on ourselves that we might forget the presence of God in our lives (chapter 3); we are Zacchaeus, unexpectedly caught up by a Jesus who invites himself into our lives (chapter 4); and we are the disciples on the road to Emmaus, so trapped by despair that we do not notice the God who walks with us (chapter 5); we are the disciples gathered in community and instructed to go beyond some self-satisfying ritual performance by remembering the active and self-living presence of God in love (chapter 6)

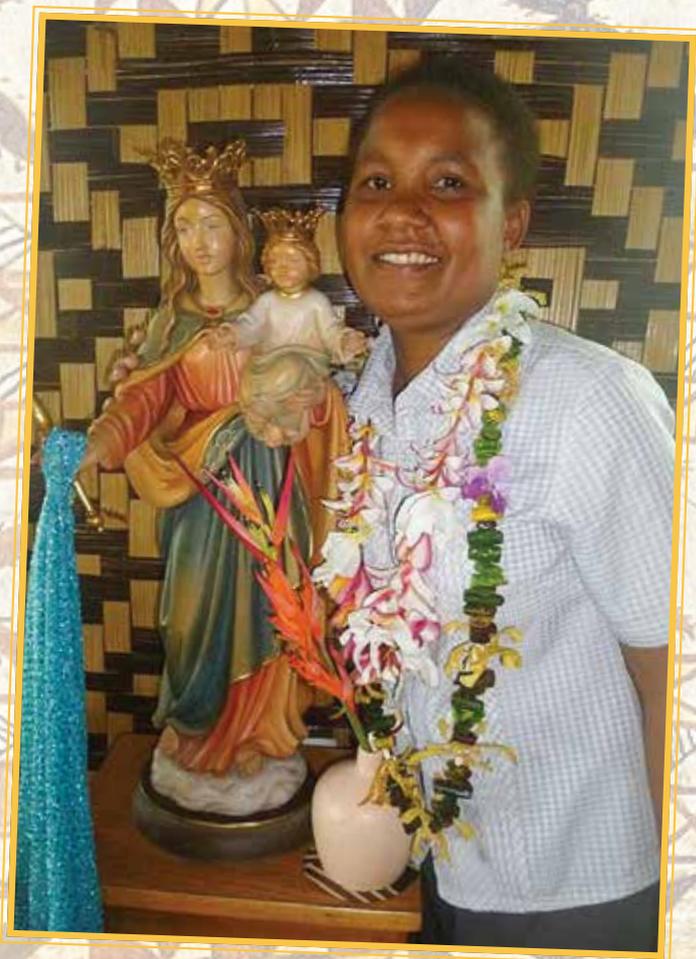
We want to see Jesus invites us to be witnesses and instruments for others to see God's presence in our lives: God with us in real terms, on God's terms.

Salesian On-Line Book Shop

We have many wonderful authors in the Salesian Family who have published numerous books. Our on-line shop gives Australians an easy way to find them all. The Book Shop on the Province website will sell a wide range of Salesian and Catholic books.

Available at: www.salesians.org.au/bookshop

The Salesian Sisters of the SPR Province welcome two newly professed
**In response to your love...
I, Sr Salome Faloamae, give myself
freely and entirely...**



My name is Sr Salome Faloamae from the Solomon Islands. I was born in a family of four, one older sister and three older brothers. My parents were born Catholic and raised me in the Catholic faith. My dad passed away when I was 19 years old. The rest of my adulthood was spent with my mum and my beloved brothers.

I am so pleased to share a little bit about my vocation story and what inspired me to choose to become a Salesian Sister and what it really means to me as a newly professed Sister.

Interestingly, I first knew the Salesian Priests, before I met the Salesian Sisters. In 2011, I went to study agriculture at Don Bosco school, in the Solomon Islands, and to learn other practical skills offered in the school. There I met my dear Salesian Sisters who came in to teach at the school.

The first thing that struck me about Don Bosco school as a boarder, was the “Family Spirit” that reigned there; the feeling of being at home, when you are away from your natural family. It was a beautiful experience and, as a new student, it was just so great to feel that family atmosphere that I had loved so much when growing up.

The other aspect that stood out for me, was the “Presence” of the Salesian Sisters and Priests. Their friendly presence with the boarders was always appreciated, be it on the farm, in the kitchen, on the playground, or in the workshops. What amazed me was that they even joined us for meals once a day and took part in our games and recreational activities. They were not only trying to give us skills for living but were actually making us feel that we were loved by their friendly presence.

It was at the Don Bosco school that I was introduced to the Salesian Sisters by Fr Joseph Thanh. Once a month he took us to the Sisters convent to participate in the Come and See Program run by the Salesian Sisters at Henderson, Solomon Islands.

These were days of reflection, prayer, sharing, fun, games and, of course, food! We would meet other young women and make new friends amongst them. The Come and See Program helped young women to discern their vocation, whether that be to religious, single or married life. Here too, I experienced the joy and friendliness of the Sisters, as they took the time to be with us, talking to us as if we had been friends for a very long time. I still don't quite understand how they did it! Their enthusiasm, whenever they were around us young people, and their simple smiles made me feel so very loved and so very special.

These experiences of the Salesian Spirit, with both the FMAs and the SDBs, is what inspired me to become one of them, to be like them, to pass on what I had received to other young people who are longing to be loved and cared for. I don't remember every bit of information that I had heard in the sessions, but I will never forget the joy and friendship I felt whenever they spent time with us young women. It was this spirit of joy and friendliness, and the great love they had for young people that inspired me to choose the Salesian way of life in the form of a FMA, so that I too could be the face of Christ among young people. After my three years of formation, I requested to make my commitment and to make my vows as a Salesian Sister, in the footsteps of St Maria Mazzarello.

January the 24th 2019 was a special day for me... when in the presence of some of my Sisters from the Province, and during the Eucharistic Celebration, surrounded by young people and friends, I freely and willingly offered my life to God, to work for His kingdom among the young in the spirit of St John Bosco and St Maria Mazzarello.

Now as a newly professed sister, what does it all mean to me? For me it is very special. Firstly, through this vocation I realised just how much God loves me, originally and chiefly through my parents who gave me life, through the people I met and the significant experiences of my life that brought me to this moment. As a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians my mission is among the young: sharing my life with the young and for the young to make them feel loved, so they know that God loves them through me, in the same way that I had experienced with the SDBs and the FMAs as a boarder.

My hope and prayer is that I may continue to be a witness to the Salesian Charism by the way I live my life with my Sisters in community and with the young people. With great trust in the God who calls me as a Salesian Sister, I am back in my own country to commence my journey with my Sisters in community and to continue my ministry with and for the young.

My heartfelt thanks to my family, my formators, and all those who have journeyed with me through my initial and novitiate formation. My gratitude to the God who calls me to be Holy, as I continue, like Mary, to say my YES each day as I live my life as a Salesian Sister with joy, with and for the young.

Sr Salome Faloamae FMA



The Salesian Sisters of the SPR Province welcome two newly professed

In response to your love...

**I, Sr Iutita Kasio, give myself freely
and entirely...**



When I was nine years old, I felt the call to become a nun, but I wasn't sure which order of nuns. Growing up in the Moamoa Theological College, where my parents were taught by many Salesians and Sisters, was certainly something, I am sure, that helped me develop my Salesian identity without me even noticing it.

I was baptised by Fr Gerritt SDB and taught by Sr Folola FMA in the pre-school. As a teenager I participated in the Salesian Sisters' Fully Alive Camps at Moamoa. These were some experiences in my life as a teenager that nourished my desire and the feeling I had at nine years of age.

Like any normal teenager, I enjoyed life. I tried hard to block out the feeling and the desire of wanting to become a nun, because whenever I shared this with my siblings and friends their reaction and response was: 'it's never gonna happen'. But the harder I tried to suppress the feeling the more it stayed with me. I also tried dating, but always ended up being best friends. These experiences were enough for me to realise that there's a reason why this 'feeling' never left me, no matter how much I wanted it to.

In Primary School I was taught by the Marist Sisters at Savalalo, Apia. I am grateful to the Sisters who taught me, because they modelled the life that I admired. They gave me the chance to realise what God really wanted of me.

Midway through my year 9 studies at St Peter Channel, my parents separated, and we moved to Savaii. My parent's separation affected me deeply; but my focus at that stage became about being strong for my mum and my two younger siblings. As I neared the end of my studies the feeling of becoming a sister came back, and this time it was stronger than ever. Unfortunately, the separation of my parents meant the separation from my contact with the Salesian Sisters as well.

However, in 2012, the Parish Priest, Fr Laga Olaaiga, announced an event run by the Salesian Sisters called Come and See Program in Salelologa. This day was a hope-filled day for me. I wasn't looking forward to the program itself so much, but thought of it as a chance to catch up with and to see the Salesian Sisters once more! The Come and See Program confirmed for me that the way of life that God was calling me to was with the Salesian Sisters.

The Come and See Program helped me set a goal for my life. I was in year 12 at the time of my participation in the program and so I made a promise to myself: I would try my hardest to get into year 13. Then, whether I passed uni or not, I decided that I would go to Leauva'a to share the life of the Salesian Sisters and to experience a little bit of community living. This initial step in my discernment journey was the start of the realisation of my desire and the feeling I had when 9 years old.

In 2014, I went to live with the Sisters in Leauva'a as a pre-candidate and attended University. This was the happiest day of my life thus far. I felt so happy, like... really, really happy! I felt I had "finally found the One - Jesus". I already was happy, and I always am happy, but this newfound happiness just simply did not compare to any other I had ever experienced. I now knew for sure that this was the life for me! Eventually I told my mum about my desire to join the Sisters but surprisingly she didn't accept it at first. It was only until the week before leaving for Australia to start my formation that my mum realised I was not joking about being a Salesian Sister!

In 2015, I was accepted as a candidate and lived full time with the Sisters in Leauva'a, with Sr Folola, Sr Doris, Sr Lavalea and Sr Filomena. In 2016, with my family and my Samoan Sisters beside me, I was admitted to the postulancy during a prayerful ceremony, in the presence of Sr Edna Mary, and thereafter, I left Samoa to commence my formation in Australia.

Honestly, I didn't know what to expect, but it turned out to involve some of the most challenging and fun-filled moments of my life. Living in a Salesian Sisters' community of different nationalities, in Scoresby, pulled me out of my shell. The Aussie young people won my heart – meeting and getting to know them are the memories that I will forever carry with me in my heart. Helping with camps in Dromana and at the St John Bosco parish youth groups helped me to continue to discern the will of God for me.

In 2017, as I prepared for my Novitiate, I was aware of the intense studies and the apostolate that awaited me. The last two years of my novitiate formation were the most challenging experience of my journey. A popular saying among young people came true for me: "The struggle is real", but where there's a will there's a way. When God calls, and you listen, there is no doubt. When I received the good news that I was admitted to make my first profession as a Salesian Sister, I was extremely excited!

The 24th of January 2019 is a day to remember, the day I totally surrendered myself to God to live chaste, poor and obedient for Jesus and with and for young people; loving them with the love of the Good Shepherd.

A huge thanks to all my family, my Salesian family and particularly to the young people who have accompanied me during my years of formation. May God be praised for all that you have given me. Let's continue the journey with and for the young people in all cheerfulness and love.

Sr Lutita Kasio FMA



Sihanoukville, Cambodia

Brother Sun Camp

By SC Cambodia Delegation



Young people from around Cambodia participating in camp

The much-anticipated Brother Sun camp took place at Don Bosco Kep, with 31 young people from around Cambodia participating, alongside Fr Albeiro Rodas, Fr Roel Soto, Cl. John Bosco Somony and Cl. Anthony Hoang.

Each group brought with them a sapling from their respective areas for the opening tree-planting ceremony. With all the different plants brought together from around the country it sent the message "We are all one Don Bosco in Cambodia."

The camp featured plenty of sports, prayers and meals and even some sessions at the Kep TV media communication studio, where vocational testimonials of Salesian life were shared. During a discussion on Sunday morning, participants spoke about the need for a similar experience every year, a need for formation, and a need for knowing more about God, Don Bosco and his Salesian family.

The camp even made a contribution to the upcoming Delegation Chapter, answering the question, "What kind of Salesians do the young people of Cambodia want?" Some of the answers were: the Salesians must be educators and friends. They must continue to be like our parents and mentors. They must always remain with the young! The Salesians must be patient and live with joy. They must communicate real values to the young and love them."



Port Moresby, PNG

Christmas on Manus

By ANS - "Agenzia iNfo Salesiana"



"We take strength from the words of the Scriptures: The people who walk in darkness shall see a great light."

In his Christmas message, Pope Francis invited us to stay by the side of refugees. A message that was heard loud and clear by the Salesians in Papua New Guinea who spent Christmas with the refugees still languishing on Manus Island. For these refugees, it is the sixth Christmas spent far from home in an extremely precarious situation for all facets of their health.

Despite the Supreme Court of Papua New Guinea had declared the detention centre for asylum seekers set up by the Australian government as illegal and unconstitutional in April of 2016, over 400 refugees are still waiting to be resettled.

Fr Ambrose Pereira has been in constant contact with the refugees for over a year. A meeting between the government, the Church, students, refugees and Papuan citizens took place in November 2018, in which Bernard Unaballi, bishop of Bougainville, strongly committed himself and suggested the Christmas period as the deadline for finding a definitive solution, but despite this, no agreement was reached.

"I have waited with hope, but the promised meetings with the Prime Minister and the Australian High Commissioner have never materialized," explained Fr Ambrose Pereira. "The offices are now closed and everyone has returned home for the holidays, while more than 400 refugees struggle to gain access to essential health and services." Finally, Fr Ambrose adds: "We take strength from the words of the Scriptures: The people who walk in darkness shall see a great light."



Chonburi, Thailand

Salesian Scouts walk with Don Bosco

By “THA SC”



The eighth Salesian Scout Jamboree

One thousand four hundred young people and just over 300 teachers, staff and volunteers came together to celebrate the eighth Salesian Scout Jamboree. The jamboree is held every three years and is a four-day camp aimed at promoting every dimension of human life: physical, spiritual, intellectual, emotional and social.

The theme of the camp was “Let’s walk together with Don Bosco”, and this flavoured all games, activities and learning moments that were held. There was also opportunities for the scouts to appreciate the beauty of their local, natural environments, as they learnt the value of caring for the planet.

The highlight of the camp came on the last night, the highly anticipated “campfire night” – a time for everyone to share their incredible personalities and joy. Everyone participated in at least one act each, highlighting the culture, customs, lifestyle and identity of the particular pocket of Thailand that they come from. It was an incredible closing ceremony – a glowing, quintessential example of “unity in diversity!”



Gwangju, Korea

Youth pilgrimage for souls and solidarity

By Fr Raphael Lee Hae Dong



Students and teachers walking together

The Joy and Hope School of Don Bosco in Gwangju, Korea, organized a three day “National pilgrimage”, walking about 100 km in solidarity with young people from developing countries. All participants underwent two weeks of training in preparation, to ensure that their feet, minds and souls were ready for such a huge undertaking!

Students and teachers walked together, building stronger community bonds, fostering a closer connection to their homeland and the beauty that can be found there. Each participant had the chance to overcome their limits as they grew in patience and endurance, and to experience a deep sense of satisfaction and achievement. The pilgrimage also enabled these young people to grow in solidarity with others of similar age but less well-off.

In the lead-up to the pilgrimage, individuals organized sponsors who would agree to donate 100 Won (approx. 10 AUD cents) for every kilometre they walked. As friends, families and others agreed to the terms, the total shot up to over 6,594,000 Won (\$8,100 AUD). This sum of money was then offered to the Don Bosco Vocation Training Centre in Myitkyina, Myanmar!



Palabek, Uganda Vocational training centre opens in Refugee Camp

by Fr Raphaël Katanga, SDB



Salesian Centre for Vocational Training opened in the refugee camp, home to over 34,000 refugees

To coincide with feast day celebrations in honour of St John Bosco, the Salesian Province of Africa Great Lakes inaugurated a Centre for Vocational Training in the refugee camp of Palabek, northern Uganda. The camp is home to over 34,000 refugees (mostly young people) fleeing civil war and violence in South Sudan, and the Salesian community lives permanently amongst them, assisting them daily.

Thousands of refugees, representatives of non-governmental organizations and a government delegation participated in the opening ceremonies, and several speeches of thanksgiving and encouragement were made by various guests and collaborators. Some of the young refugees also demonstrated their talent by singing some specially composed songs in honour of Don Bosco, praising and thanking the Saint of Youth and his spiritual Sons.

Starting with 6 training courses, the centre will be flexible, adapting to the new professions required by the labour market. Students will benefit from a free formation course of 3 to 6 months and/or a formation of one year, depending on the choice of courses and the skills of the individual student.

Furthermore, an internal job placement office has been set up, putting students in contact with companies, accompanying them on site visits and interviews, and helping them find traineeship options.

Through vocational training these young people will be able to give themselves and their families social stability and improve their living conditions.



Panama City, Panama Panama for Don Bosco

Source: ANS



The feast day celebrations in Panama City were a truly global expression of all things Salesian

This year, feast day celebrations in Panama City were a truly global expression of all things Salesian. As Fr Romulo Gallegos, director of the youth centre Basilica of Don Bosco, explained, "The patron saint of Panama is Our Lady of Santa Maria la Antigua, but St John Bosco is so revered that every year on 31 January, four hundred thousand people gather to celebrate!"

A procession of a relic of Don Bosco took place, and in many ways, these celebrations were a continuation of the incredible joy and spirit that had flourished during World Youth Day. In fact, about 100 young people from around Colombia, Mexico, Central America and other countries of the world also participated in these celebrations.

In his homily, the archbishop of Panama expressed, "that you stop being young when you stop dreaming ... I become old if I stop dreaming. Today we are living an extension of World Youth Day; 'Panama belongs to Don Bosco and Don Bosco belongs to Panama'."

"Don Bosco continues to be as modern as it was 160 years ago," the Rector Major said. "The profiles of boys and girls will change. We know that young people with their cultures are different, but they are very similar in the heart. We offer them a home, a family, a project; we prepare them for life and present them with freedom to God who loves them so much."



Esmeralda, Ecuador From volunteer to vocation

Source: ANS



Nicson hopes to continue in the process of discernment of his vocation whilst volunteering in the local community

Daily work with vulnerable children and young people has aroused the interest of Nicson Sicha, an 18-year old, for the consecrated life. He was volunteering alongside Salesians like Fr Pedro Vidal, and seeing the incredible results achieved by such hard work up close has motivated this young man to follow in the footsteps of Don Bosco.

"Volunteering is a step to decide what you will do with your life, to clarify your doubts about the future; in my specific case, I am thinking of Salesian life," says Nicson. In fact, it was his brother Dillan, born with a brain disability and a great desire to live, that first inspired Nicson to volunteer for the benefit of others in the first place.

And yet, one of the main obstacles Nicson has experienced so far is the reluctance and refusal to accept this calling by his family members. On top of this, there is no Salesian presence in his area and so it is hard for him to follow previous examples of formation.

Now Nicson hopes to continue in the process of discernment and strengthening of his vocation, whilst operating from the Santa Martha neighbourhood (where the Salesian community operates), an area full of underage drug use and other such aggressive, destructive behaviours. The roughness of the area surprised him at first, but he then "realized that it is God who brought us there, and so one recovers the desire to continue giving one's all."



Touba, Mali Soaps that improve lives

Source: ANS



Girls and young women are being trained to make and sell soap, taking real steps to improve their standard of living.

Due to a range of conflicts and escalations, World Vision estimates that at least 483,000 Malinese people are in need of humanitarian assistance.

The Salesians, aware of the need to support and help people in a tangible way, are working to improving the lives of women by developing a project for the production of soap. Over 50 girls and young women from the village of Touba are being trained in the production of soap, so they can then start a small shop to sell their goods and take real steps towards improving their standard of living.

With this initiative, the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians are supporting local development in an inclusive way, strengthening the role of women within society in rural areas such as Touba.

In the same space where the lessons will be held and where soap will be produced, there will also be a place where girls and young people can enjoy recreational activities. It will thus be a place for formation, but also for meeting and sharing experiences.

Without a doubt, this is a project in favour of the fundamental rights of women and support for the population in the middle of the alarming, growing humanitarian situation.



Japan Tokio-Chofu, Japan - 1931



Some boys of the Salesian oratory pose for a souvenir photo with the venerable missionary Fr Vincenzo Cimatti. The Salesian house in Japan was started in 1931.

Vincenzo Cimatti was born in Faenza on 15 July 1879 to James and Rosa Pasi, last of seven children. When he turned 46, Don Rinaldi sent him in 1927 to lead the group founding the Salesian presence in Japan. He worked there for 40 years. He won the hearts of the Japanese by his kindness, getting involved, like Don Bosco, in the apostolate of the press and of music. He died in Japan, with patriarchal status, on 6 October 1965. Now he lies in the crypt in Chofu. Vincent has been declared Venerable in 1991.

The Salesian Presence in Japan today.

Ninety-one Salesians living in 15 communities form the Salesian presence in Japan today. Their apostolic activities on behalf of the youth of Japan cover the administration of schools, conducting youth centres, chaplaincies and administrating parishes, the dedicated care of marginalised youth most in need many of whom are children of migrants. A vibrant Salesian Family supports the Province's initiatives of an overseas Missionary Volunteer programme.