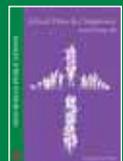




THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SALESIAN FAMILY

# DON BOSCO TODAY

THE SALESIAN BULLETIN • YEAR 116 • ISSUE 3 • AUTUMN 2008



# Editorial



This edition is mainly about young people in the Church today. Our Salesian Rule makes it quite clear:

## Young people are called to serve the Church

*To meet the needs of his people the Lord continually calls some to follow him, and enriches them with a variety of gifts in the service of the Kingdom. We are convinced that many young people are rich in spiritual potential and give indications of an apostolic vocation. We help them to discover, accept and develop the gift of a lay, consecrated or priestly vocation, for the benefit of the whole Church and of the Salesian Family.*

The first article is the result of an interview with Jessica, the Team Leader at our Retreat Centre at Savio House. She is well placed to know the young people of today since students and teachers from so many schools benefit from a few days' retreat there.

The World Youth Day 2008 (**WYD2008**), which took place in Australia this year, gives us an optimistic picture of the Church of young people. I quote an extract from one Salesian group from Indonesia:

The young pilgrims were immediately at home as they experienced the red-carpet hospitality of Sydneysiders, who were overwhelmingly gracious and warm. But what would remain as one of the most unforgettable experiences for this group of twenty young people, travelling from Jakarta, is their participation in the Salesian World Youth Day at Engadine, south of Sydney. These Jakarta youths experienced the thrill of their lives as they encountered and interacted with fellow Salesian youth from all over the world. What was to complete their joy was encountering the Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez. No wonder then that one of the lads remarked, *Father, can we just stay here please?* (which reminded one of Peter's remark *Lord, how wonderful for us to be here!*). The catechesis sessions in the morning, the faith-sharing and availability of the Sacraments are what changed them from tourists into pilgrims.

I have included an article entitled *Don Bosco's Brothers* to explain that the vocation to the religious life is alive and relevant in the Church today. The last article is of a practical nature, the corporal works of mercy as given in Matthew's Gospel (c 25 vv.31-46).

Too many people in the Church are pessimistic about young people today. Certainly they are not the same as young people were many years ago. They are different, they live in a different world, but they are good people. I hope that when you have read this issue you may appreciate the wonderful world of young people today.

Readers in the British Isles will have received a free Don Bosco Calendar with this issue; the 2009 calendar has the theme, *The Smiles of Youth*.

Finally I hope the football antics of Bosco Bear might bring a smile to your face.

Anthony Bailey SDB  
Editor

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# What did I learn?

**Jessica Wilkinson**

**Retreat Team Leader at Savio House**



# “ The only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing ”

## What have you learnt from your father?

How to love children. Hard work, for whatever he achieved was through hard work.

The example of how to live one's faith, fervently. Also his passion for his faith.

## What have you learnt from your mother?

Mum showed me self-giving, everyday holiness, comfort and joy. Maybe these things that she modelled for me, inspired me to give similarly to those I meet and work with. She had enormous love and patience and really knew how to care for people.

## What did you learn from school?

I was shy and retiring when I went to secondary school, but because I was given responsibility I began to grow in confidence and I learned to be a leader. I was the first Eucharistic Minister in my school, and that gave me great joy.

## What have you learnt from your present responsibility?

The volunteers who work with me have a great sense of fun and a great generosity in giving themselves. I am constantly inspired by their generosity to each other and the young people they meet on retreat. They have fantastic gifts and they are prepared to share them. I know that the children who come on retreat are inspired by these young volunteers. Learning how to live in community is part of their training. I learn from their enthusiasm and their energy and the gifts they are prepared to share.

## What did you learn from the teachers who accompany the children on retreat?

I have been impressed by their dedication and generosity, in giving much more than a teacher's job requires. Sometimes the teachers seem to get more out of the retreat than the youngsters. The way they are open to learn how to deal with children in a more relaxed way. The way they are prepared to go out of their comfort zone and be prepared to break down barriers. They seem to learn alongside the children in their care and be inspired to learn more about their faith.

## What did you learn from books?

It is hard to decide because I love so many books. But at the beginning of *The Little Prince* by Antoine De Saint-Exupery, it says how grown-ups don't seem to understand anything by themselves and how tedious it is for children to have to explain things to them. I think that this made me more determined to be the best teacher and now youth worker that I can, to try my hardest not to become a *proper grown-up* if it meant that I was to become tedious and not understanding of the wonder of what it is to be a child. No wonder God chose to reveal the mysteries of the Kingdom to such as these!

## What did you learn from your mistakes?

John Powell once wrote, *The only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing*. I have tried to learn from my mistakes and definitely grown as a result of my mistakes.

# World Youth Day - Sign of a new springtime for the Church

By Most Rev. Julian Porteous  
Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney



**I would like to begin by posing three questions:**

- **What impressed you most at World Youth Day?**
- **Beyond the actual events what did you experience?**
- **What happened to you at World Youth Day?**

I would like to offer some thoughts of my own.  
I would like to single out three significant impressions:

- The extraordinary outpouring of Joy in the streets of Sydney
- The evident thirst by the pilgrims for being given the Truth
- The sense of Reverence witnessed to, particularly at the major events

## **Joy on the streets**

What has astounded the city of Sydney has been the effusion of joy over the WYD period. It has become the single most common comment from Sydneysiders about the WYD. They were amazed at the spirit in the pilgrims. People just presumed that such a large gathering of young people would produce its own problems – like impatience or rowdy behaviour. People were struck by the peace, the calm and good natured happiness of the pilgrims.

The police, in particular, could not get over how cooperative and friendly the pilgrims were.

People were saying at the end that they wish the spirit of the WYD could stay in the city. Families were crying as their pilgrims said goodbye. The pilgrims had an extraordinary effect on all sorts of people. What amazed people was the fact that these pilgrims did not need alcohol or drugs to manufacture this joy. It was genuine and flowed from hearts full of faith. This joy challenged people to look at what Christian faith has to offer. It was perhaps the strongest witness of all to the truth of the Christian message. People could see that it was not put on. It was simple, humble and absolutely real. It was infectious. Bus drivers joined in the singing. Train carriages were caught up with the spirit. It washed over the city. Many people were deeply touched by this unaffected happiness. Joy is an authentic sign of

the Kingdom of God. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit listed by St Paul in his Letter to the Galatians. The WYD in Sydney was a little taste of heaven where love rules!

### The thirst for truth

Since WYD the most sought after follow-up experience is Catechesis. Before WYD the concept of catechesis was a foreign one to just about everyone – from young people, to priests, to teachers. If the word was understood it was considered to be an alien idea – some would have felt that this was likely to be the least successful part of the WYD programme. The young people would be more interested in the festival concerts and the big events.

One of the comments made by many of the bishops was that the highlight of the WYD for them was the catechesis. It was certainly for me. The young people were open and responsive. Their questions revealed a genuine searching. The bishops were given teaching topics based on themes given by the Pontifical Council for the Laity. These topics were: the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual believer, the Holy Spirit as the soul of the Church, the Holy Spirit as the agent for mission.

The young people were interested and attentive. They asked good and searching questions. They had a thirst for the truth. As one young man said to me, he wanted substance, not opinions! He did not want to be asked what he thought, he wanted to hear what the Church thought.

The young people wanted particularly to hear what Pope Benedict had to say. They understand what he is saying about the problem of relativism. I was involved in a television programme being beamed live to Italy and the presenter asked a group of young people what inspired them about the WYD and one young man said that it was the words of the Pope. He said he was touched by what the Pope had to say. The presenter then commented that some journalists were saying that the message of the Pope was too complex and that it was hard to understand. The young man commented that he had no problem understanding the Pope.

This revealed something significant: young people are attuned to the message of the Pope. They look to him. They trust him. They know that he speaks the truth. It is testimony to their faith. They are open and able to receive things of the spirit. The young people had ears to hear! They were not standing in

judgement and analysis, they were simply able to receive the message of the Pope.

Pope Benedict gave some profound reflections on the significance of faith and the role of the Holy Spirit today. The young pilgrims wanted something solid. They are not interested in shallow and superficial messages. The young pilgrims came looking to be spiritually fed and they were not disappointed.

This reveals something of great significance. Young people are turning to the Church with open hearts. They want something sound and solid from the Church. They won't settle for anything wishy washy.

### A sense of reverence

There was a profound moment during the Vigil at Randwick which many have commented upon. It was the moment when the Blessed Sacrament was brought out onto the altar for adoration. A silence fell over the crowd. This crowd that had been singing and dancing, this crowd that had been full of youthful exuberance, suddenly went profoundly quiet.

There were two other moments of profound silence – one was at the final scenes of the Stations of the Cross and the other was after Holy Communion at the final Mass.

The young people attending this WYD had a keen sense of what is sacred. They have a reverence for the things of God. They can sing and dance, but more than that they can enter into deep prayer.

I am told that people could not get into the tents for adoration during the vigil as they were full. One man said he came back to the tent at 4am and there were still many young people in prayer, but there was enough space for him to get in to pray. Some young people were in deep prayer before the Blessed Sacrament for long periods of time. These pilgrims have discovered silent interior prayer.

Some priests were saying to me that you cannot understand the WYD until you hear confessions. There were 1,000 priests hearing confessions. Priests told me that they went for hours on end hearing confessions. Many told me of some of the most wonderful moments of their priesthood were experienced at this WYD. This is one of the great graces of the WYD. The confession is the moment of personal conversion. Many young pilgrims will leave Sydney being in a new place with God.

# The Spirit of World Youth Day

## A Pilgrim's Reflection



**About half way through the pilgrimage we went to two catechesis sessions in the local church in Engadine.**

**These sessions were obviously centred on the Holy Spirit.**

Two bishops were talking about various things on this topic. I noticed a recurring phrase that we should open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit. I realised that I didn't really know what they were talking about, or rather that I didn't know how to do that. So on the second day I decided to ask and even though this bishop was an interesting and inspiring speaker and clearly a very spiritual man, he didn't really answer my question.

So then I got thinking to see if I could find a more satisfactory answer for myself but I wasn't having too much luck with it. So then I thought, *Maybe there is no definite answer, perhaps it is something that is too personal and depends on your individual view of what constitutes a spiritual experience and how you view the world.*

I identified some of the aspects of World Youth Day that affected me most deeply and which I think of as my spiritual experiences:

- The crowds of people who came together for the same purpose.
- The singing and dancing that occurred at all the events, and the joy that people showed at just being there with one another.
- The amazing friendliness of everyone, pilgrims and locals alike, everybody had a kind word or a smile, and sometimes even a hug!

So I realised several things. Firstly that the bishop couldn't have given me an answer that would have satisfied me. He didn't know me and hadn't seen the things that I had seen or experienced the Spirit in the same ways that I have. I also realised that connecting with the Spirit is a deeply personal experience, in which there can be no generalisations and therefore each pilgrim who went to WYD will have left with a different impression and will have a different version of what WYD meant to them. Sometimes the difference is subtle but it will always be there. That is why although there were thousands and thousands of pilgrims attending the WYD it is still essentially a personal experience and a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit.

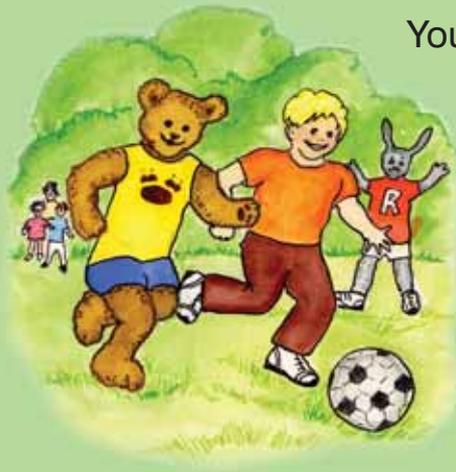
**Emily Malyon-Roberts**



# The Bear Facts

## Hello Children

Lots of boys and girls like football. I love it! I'm a goalkeeper! First of all, sport keeps you healthy. Exercise and fresh air, even if it's raining, are so good for you.



You can learn a lot from football. You can, unfortunately, copy some things that are bad. It's important to have respect for the players you are playing against and the referee. If they weren't there, you wouldn't have a game!

It's important to have the right attitude while you are playing: good footballers try even harder if they are losing. You try as hard as you possibly can to win and when you do it feels great: BUT no-one wins all the time and you have to learn how to lose properly. When a game ends you should shake hands and start to plan for the next one, because the game you've just played is finished.

### WHAT'S MY ANSWER COMPETITION RESULTS

What have I learned from my family? *That they love me.*

What have I learned from my friends? *I've learned I need to be kind as well as friendly.*

What makes me really happy? *Having a lovely family.*

Write a short prayer. *Dear God; thank you for providing me with all the wonderful things in life; Amen.*

#### Prize Winners:

MATTHEW SHAW, aged 6. SHANNON WHEATLEY, aged 10.

LUCY RAWLINSON, aged 7 and BETH ROTHERY, aged 8.

The winners will receive a copy of either *Our Colourful Church Year* or *101 Saints and Special People*.

Bosco Bear



# FOOTBALL CRAZY!

## MONDAY

Back to School, Even better, it's the football season, said Bosco Bear.

We want a good team this year, we'll have a trial match on Friday, said the manager, Mr Fabio Frog.

## WEDNESDAY

Mr Frog put a teamsheet up on the notice board.



The Sweeper

## FRIDAY

I see Kate is in goal for you, said Bosco to Rio. I knew a girl who was always standing between goalposts.

Oh, said Rio. What was her name?

Annette, said Bosco.

## THE BIG MATCH:

Just before the kick-off, Molly told Rio that she would fly down the wing. Rio shook his head. Frank Ferret told Rio that he tidied his own room so he would be the sweeper. Rio shook his head twice. Phweeee...,went Mr Frog's whistle. They're off!

## FOOTBALL CRAZY

Rio crossed the ball, Suzi tried to duck but it hit her head and

went to Ben Badger,

who shot

at the goal! Bosco tipped it past the post! Suzi felt dizzy: she needed the magic sponge.

Boscos team got a free-kick.



The Magic Sponge



Put up a wall, said Rio.  
 We haven't any bricks! said Ben.  
 Rio put his head in his hands!  
 As he looked up he saw  
 Graham Greyhound whack the  
 ball into the net.



The Wall

BARCELONA BEARS 1 REAL RABBITS 0

### HALF-TIME

*These oranges are good,* said Danielle Deer.  
*We haven't any cakes, have we?* asked Bosco.

### SECOND HALF

Rio's team were on top: he was trying like mad. He ran into the penalty area: Harold went to tackle him and Rio fell to the ground.

*Dive!* shouted Bosco.

*Foul!* screamed Rio.

*Penalty!* said Mr Frog.

Everyone came close to watch apart from Molly who sat down on the halfway-line.

Rio shot! Bosco dived! The ball hit the bar and came back to Rio. He shot again, it hit Bosco's foot and bounced down the field to Molly.

*Go Molly, go!* shouted Bosco.

She sped towards the goal, took aim and fired the ball past Kate Cat!

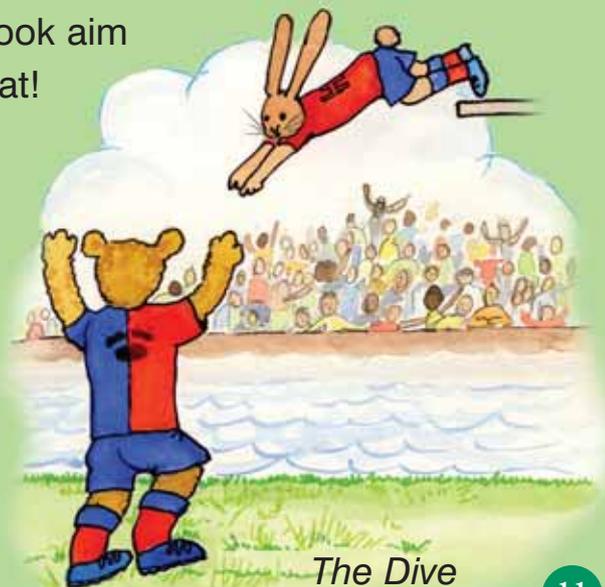
# GOAL!

BARCELONA BEARS 2 REAL RABBITS 0

Mr Frog blew the full-time whistle. Rio held out his hand and pulled Bosco up off the floor.

*You were so lucky to win that game,* he said.

Bosco just grinned.



The Dive

# Football

## Life's Golden Rule

Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

That's hard to understand isn't it? It means you should behave towards other people in the same way that you want other people to behave towards you. Many people think it's one of the most important ideas you can have

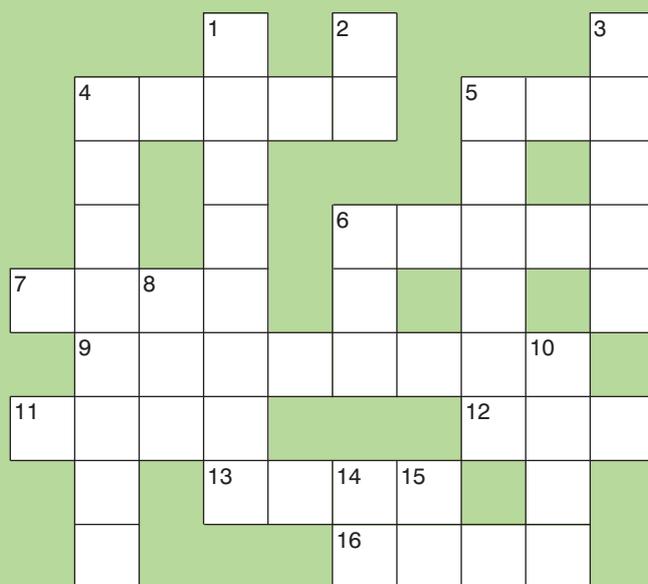
as you grow up and live your life. You should think about it. No-one is perfect and it's hard to do the right thing all the time, but you should try.

Football, in fact all sports and games, give you a chance to show a good attitude. If you don't like people moaning at you; don't moan. If you don't like people boasting if they've won; don't boast. If you don't like people cheating; don't cheat. If you don't like people who give up; don't give up. If you were the referee would you want players arguing with you? If you wouldn't, then don't do it. Do you like it if people praise you after a game? If you do, then praise other people.

You can get into the habit of doing these things when you are young and you'll always do them; and the reason you'll do them is because you think they are RIGHT.



## BOSCOWORD



### ACROSS

- 4. A dark colour (5)
- 5. A type of tree (3)
- 6. City in Italy where Don Bosco was born (5)
- 7. The abominable snowman (4)
- 9. Founder of Salesians (3-5)
- 11. Choirs do this (4)
- 12. A long time (3)
- 13. If you don't, you could drown! (4)
- 16. Summer Fair (4)

### DOWN

- 1. Famous battle in 1066 (8)
- 2. Alright (2)
- 3. A mobile (5)
- 4. Name of the Pope (8)
- 5. Nigeria and Ghana are in this Continent (6)
- 6. How many are there in twins (3)
- 8. Very heavy weight (3)
- 10. Shrek was one of these (4)
- 14. Perhaps (2)
- 15. I (2)

Send your entries to: **DON BOSCO PUBLICATIONS**  
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 Include your name, age and address

# Salesian Christmas Gift Catalogue 2008

## A Heartfelt Thank you

Thanks to your marvellous generosity our Christmas Catalogue raised just under £14,000. Many of you were kind enough to comment on how you enjoyed giving gifts that make a real difference to the lives of young people. You also gave us helpful feedback which we have used to improve our service.

We have made full use of the money you donated. You have trained volunteers, funded residential retreats, provided sports equipment, games, CDs and musical instruments for our youth clubs (including the Croxteth, Liverpool club started last year by the Salesian Sisters in response to the gun and knife culture in that area). You also funded youth club outings for disadvantaged young people; provided comfort resources for all our chaplaincies, catechists' materials for all our parishes; re-stocked '*Mass Bags*' for toddlers; redecorated youth meeting rooms and contributed funding for a summer play scheme and a special project for disaffected young people.



We cannot thank you enough for your amazing support which allows us to continue and develop our work with young people. We hope you will continue to support our Christmas Catalogue initiative. This year, we are delighted to be joined in our fundraising efforts by the Salesian Sisters. The 2009 catalogue will be sent to you in October, the catalogue continues to be developed and run entirely by volunteers.

The Christmas Catalogue Volunteer Team.

# Don Bosco's Brothers

Our Salesian community in Bolton was blessed this year by four *Brother* events, the death of Brother Tom Caulfield, the 100th birthday of Brother Christopher Gorton, the profession of Brother Sandy Fairley and the visit of Brother Claudio Marangio, Economer General. These events made us reflect on the vocation of the Salesian Brother.



*Fr Winstanley - Brother Chris - Fr O'Meara - Brother Michael*

When Don Bosco founded the Salesians in the 19th century, he envisaged a different kind of religious order in the Church. He wanted a religious family of priests and laymen. At a time of anticlericalism, he wanted to make it clear that to be a religious you didn't have to be a priest. Our present Salesian Constitutions state:

**The Salesian brother brings to every field of education and pastoral activity the specific qualities of his lay status, which make him in a particular way a witness to God's Kingdom in the world, close as he is to the young and to the realities of working life.**

Brother Tom Caulfield, who died just a month before the 100th birthday of Brother Chris, had been looking forward to the 100th birthday of his great friend, often reminding us that when he, Tom, was a four-year-old new boy, Chris, then fourteen, had made him welcome on his first day at school. They had remained friends throughout their Salesian life. When Brother Tom died we found he had left a birthday card for Brother Chris in which he had written:

**A century attained, at last.  
At a steady pace, not slow not fast.  
With thanks to God who gave the strength  
A mighty score to gain at length.  
Not keen on sport, nor games of chance,**

**Rather on work with joy and dance.  
This mighty score just makes us glad  
It's what you've aimed at since a lad.**

We celebrated the 100th birthday of Brother Chris on Sunday 15th June 2008. At the Mass I read out Tom's birthday card and in the archives we had found a copy of the letter Chris had written when applying to become a Salesian when he was 24 years old. He wrote that he had a great longing to be admitted into the Salesian Congregation and promised to do his **very best to give satisfaction, and become a 100% Salesian**. At the end of the Mass, Fr Winstanley, our provincial presented him with the Papal Blessing from Pope Benedict XVI and a personal letter and blessing from our Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chavez. Brother Chris was visibly moved and delighted. Some of his family and friends had been invited to the festive meal which followed. Brother Chris was presented with a telegram from the Queen, in a beautiful folder. Encouraged by his good friend and fellow tailor, Fr Michael O'Meara, Brother Chris responded by joining energetically in the singing of some of his favourite songs, including predictably **Keep right on to the end of the road**.

On August 16th Brother Sandy Fairley, aged 23, was professed as a Salesian Brother in our chapel at Thornleigh, Bolton. Sandy is from Polbeth, a village near Edinburgh, Scotland. He met the Salesians through a former Salesian Sister who was one of his high school teachers. She introduced him to VIDES, the Sisters' lay volunteer programme, and he enthusiastically participated in that for several years. When he left school Sandy worked with the Salesian Sisters in their retreat house in Kendal, Cumbria, for a year. He then moved to the Salesians' retreat centre, Savio House in Bollington, Cheshire. Sandy soon realised that the Salesian life was for him. To broaden his experience of it, he moved to Bootle, near Liverpool, where he lived in the Salesian community and did various forms of youth ministry in the parish and in Savio High School. Something caused him to hesitate to commit himself to the Salesians however, and after a year he returned to his parents' home in Scotland and got a job working with children with special needs. That experience brought Sandy back to the Salesians. In August 2007 he went to the USA, to make his novitiate year at St Joseph's Novitiate, Port Chester, New York. Sandy remarked to a Salesian in America that what most attracted him to the Salesians was how **normal** he found them. He felt



*Brothers Sandy and Claudio*

that they made Savio House a real home for the volunteers who worked there.

Sandy is grateful for the welcome that he received in the New Rochelle Province. After his profession he is now continuing his studies in youth and community education at George Williams College in London and has joined the Salesian community at Battersea, London. He then looks forward to going wherever he may be able to serve young people as a Salesian Brother, bringing a young face to the Salesian presence in his province.

Present at Sandy's profession was Brother Claudio Marangio, a past pupil of the Salesians in Turin. This year he was appointed as one of our Salesian superiors in Rome. He has overall responsibility for the Salesian finances throughout the world. I see his appointment as recognition by the Salesians of the importance of the vocation of the Salesian Brother.

My own personal reflection on the vocation of the Salesian Brother is that it brings a richness and variety to our Salesian family. We have been blessed and are still blessed in this province by outstanding Brothers. I recall with particular affection and appreciation Brother Michael Grix, who died seven years ago, having founded the work of Don Bosco Publications. He who brought hope and consolation to many readers of this magazine through the apostolate of his letter writing. At present, our two homes for our elderly Salesians are managed by Salesian Brothers, Brother Michael Delmer and Brother Joe Adams. They have made these two houses places of prayer and relaxation for our elderly confreres.

The Church has recognised the vocation of the Salesian Brother by declaring Brother Artemides Zatti, Blessed and Brother Simon Srugi, Venerable. May others be called to this great vocation.

Tony Bailey SDB

# Bosco Volunteer Action



Over the last eighteen months, Bosco Volunteer Action (BOVA) has gradually changed its emphasis: moving from solely sending volunteers to serve in Salesian communities around the world, to recognising the volunteer experience as being only a part of the journey.

A journey which we hope will lead to something ongoing, and will recognise the volunteers' potential for involvement in justice and peace on their return. This change is due to asking difficult questions about the use of volunteers in developing countries. For example, one Mexican Salesian asked a volunteer, *What was the point of coming to just cuddle a few babies and feel good?*

This has led to the educational philosophy evident in our mission statement:

**Learning through action; serving the young and the poor, alongside Salesian communities around the world.**

Below are four examples of volunteers' ongoing involvement. More can be read on our website:

[www.boscovolunteeraction.co.uk](http://www.boscovolunteeraction.co.uk).

## Ongoing action for Bolivia

Simon Treacy, a past pupil of Farnborough Salesian College, was a volunteer in a girls' home in Bolivia.

On returning from my first experience as a Salesian volunteer I was keen to continue my involvement, not only with the Salesians but also with the project itself.

In coordination with BOVA and Fr Bob, I began fundraising for a new development at the town where I had volunteered. The aim was to raise a total of US\$8000 to build a small house for future volunteers to work at the same project in Bolivia.

After three months of fundraising, and thanks largely to the incredible generosity of local Salesian parishes and the Salesian school, we have nearly achieved our target.

Following on from this development, there are plans to establish the long-term connection between the Salesian in the UK and the project in Bolivia by setting up a charitable trust.

Personally, I feel this ongoing action is a very important way to recognise the good work that I witnessed being done at the project. The trust will support the young people at the project and also be an opportunity for future volunteers to maintain their links with their volunteer experience in Bolivia.

## Award winning work

Angela Duffy, and her husband Leo, have volunteered in a number of countries, including Ghana and the Philippines, with Bosco Volunteer Action and Vides UK. While in the UK Angela presents stories and photos from their experiences to *anyone who will listen*, raising thousands of pounds to support the

work of the Salesians overseas. She was recently awarded the prestigious **Paul Harris Fellowship** by the Rotary Club for her work.

Angela, a retired teacher, and Leo, who offers teaching and support with computers, have recently requested another placement with BOVA – this time in Mongolia. At the time we had no links with Salesians there. However, within days, an email reached us from Mongolia with a request for an English teacher and computer technician; divine providence at work!

## Don Bosco across Europe

Patrick Kerridge was one of BOVA's first volunteers. He lived and worked with the Salesians in India.

After my 6 months volunteering I have continued my involvement by helping out at the Salesian Sisters' youth club in Streatham as well as by becoming a representative of DBYN (Don Bosco Youth-Net). DBYN is an international network of Salesian youth organisations working in the style of Don Bosco. The network brings together member organisations from 13 EU member states, made up of over 1,000 employees and 17,000 volunteers who cater for over 150,000 children and young people. I attend seminars and am now one of the trainers for international activities. In addition, I am still involved with BOVA - helping out at training weekends and as a support worker for volunteers overseas.

## World Student Christian Federation Solidarity Conference

Kathryn Ellis has built on her volunteer experience through involvement with the Student Christian Movement.

After my BOVA placement I didn't want my volunteering or intercultural learning to just come to a halt. As a member of the Student Christian Movement I have been involved in various retreats and conferences so when I heard about an international opportunity I jumped at the chance. Along with another representative from the UK I went to Paris for a conference about peace and violence where I met many interesting people and was inspired to become more involved.

I soon found myself helping to organise the next conference: 'A Just Life or just life?', held in

Budapest. We aimed to raise awareness about alternative globalisation, social justice, fair trade and the global responsibility for poverty reduction. This was done through lectures, workshops, discussions, role play and Bible study. I involved James and BOVA after hearing him talk about volunteering as I thought a presentation from him would encourage us to do something in our own countries. Following this, we gave participants the chance to do a small act of volunteering in Budapest: with a homeless organisation, a home for people with disabilities or a human rights organisation.

Prayer at the conference was particularly moving, as each evening was organised by different denominations. This gave us the chance to experience a range of approaches to worship, reminding us that although we come from different parts of the world, we are one body in Christ. The week was an emotional one, full of laughter and tears, but also an excellent opportunity to learn more about poverty issues and to discuss them in different cultural contexts.

These four individuals, as well as the other stories on the website (including BOVA groups at the 'Drop the debt' and 'LiveSimply' events), are examples of people whose volunteer experiences have acted as a stimulus for ongoing involvement.

In all aspects of BOVA's work, including training weekends, formation while overseas and after returning to the UK, there is a focus on providing a well-planned educational experience; stimulating and encouraging a long-term involvement with development issues, faith in action and Salesian family. This reflects the Salesians' international thinking on volunteering which observes that, *Salesian voluntary service is primarily concerned with the personal and social maturing of the volunteer who accepts the challenge of educating while being educated oneself* and calls for Salesian Non-Governmental Organisations to encourage campaigning and *education to a world view*. (Voluntary Service and Salesian Mission: Handbook and Guidelines).

We feel privileged to have supported our volunteers on their journeys.

James Trewby, Bosco Volunteer Action

# Myanmar Revisited

*On the 2nd May 2008 cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar leaving behind it destruction and desolation. With other local organisations the Salesians also did what they could for the survivors. Although some time has now passed, we publish a report by Fr Charles Saw of the work undertaken by the Salesians and their friends.*

## Water

We were able to clean the wells of four villages near Ai Ma. The stagnant water and debris were totally taken care of by four Salesians, who spent their time operating the two pumps, until drinkable water was made available for the area.

Usually the local people collect rainwater in ponds and reservoirs; work they normally carry out the whole year. This year, it was not possible, because of the storm. Branches, trees, decaying vegetation, stagnant water and sand, together with sea water, inundated the wells and water resources. We had to re-dig the ponds, and drain away the contaminated water. Fifteen new wells were dug to guarantee a steady source of clean drinking water.

We offered our services to anyone in need, there was no distinction on account of race or creed. We were there simply to help. Buddhist monasteries as well as other Christian denominations were part and parcel of our humanitarian assistance. We were able to count on the help of two skilled drillers with the necessary experience and equipment. In one case we had to drill down 60 metres to find fresh water.

## Pests

Immediately after the storm there were no birds, flies or mosquitoes, but later when the bodies of people and the carcasses of animals began to surface, clouds of insects appeared which multiplied so much that it was impossible to control them. Malaria, which occurs in these low-lying areas near the sea is notorious. The situation got worse through the lack of drugs. We distributed mosquito repellents but the tenacity of these little creatures is astounding. They seem to appear from nowhere once the effects wear off. It was a lost cause driving them away. Two of the Brothers took charge of spraying the whole area with

fly repellent and they were fully occupied for the whole month until the end of our stay.

## Power Tillers

The deadly tidal surges took the lives of most cows and buffaloes. Some survived the storm, only to die of thirst and starvation. The loss of their owner's lives also left nobody to take care of them. Survivors of battered areas were in no condition to look after themselves, let alone their animals. This was a severe blow to the agriculture sector. Then there was the time factor. There were only 30 days left for the cultivation of rice. That is why we channelled our efforts towards procuring seven small tractors and we provided the villages with 20 barrels of diesel oil to run them. Before we set off for the relief work among the cyclone-hit villages, we got hold of vehicles, rations, seedlings and construction materials. We also recruited the manpower to implement these projects. The relief supplies and daily needs (rice, salt, oil plus other condiments) were transported and distributed day and night.

## Chainsaw and Wood Cutting

As other forms of wood were not available, betel palm trees came into use because there were many of them and they were easy to split. Another type of building material was the coconut tree, these trees had fallen by the hundreds but to split them was a problem due to the lack of saws and skill. Everything was scarce. Priority was given to survival and sustainability. Other things such as agriculture were of less importance. The stricken victims had nothing, neither material nor money. The houses were rebuilt, making use of the fallen coconut palms. The villagers were at a loss, as they had neither tools nor resources. With the chainsaws, our group proved their skills producing pillars, beams, rafters and planks for the floor and walls. Ordinary saws, if there had been any, would have been of little help.



### Rice Cultivation

The usual procedures in planting rice had to be abandoned. Sowing had to be done immediately after the tilling. There was no time to lose. Though the need for seeds was greater, there was no alternative. Many plots were unattended because of the death of the owners. The people all joined in and helped each other on a communal basis, and their joint efforts were rewarded. We made our contribution procuring fuel for the tractors and seeds for planting and giving a hand tilling the land. We were proud to have been able to help some 200 families with enough food for the coming harvesting season. The recipients included widows, orphans and those who were in no condition to work.

Some were engaged in taking a census of the missing people, and although some came only out of curiosity, others worked with dedication. It was touching to see how the local people welcomed the visitors. They offered them what little they had, including the scarce drinking water. This generosity was not superficial, but came from the heart of the survivors. So as not to be a burden on the people, our group was extra careful in bringing the necessary provisions for our own needs.

### Our Daily Bread and Work

Our provisions included packets of dried noodles, sardines and dry rations, blankets, mosquito nets, mosquito coils, candles and lighters. We shared them with the people. We cooked our own meals and dedicated most of our time to work. Each day began with prayers and Mass. We then worked till darkness fell. Water treatment plants and purifying tablets were used to deal with the contamination. Tottering houses were shored up; roofs and walls put into place. We also helped to repair a convent and restore it to use.

Because initially the houses were uninhabitable, we had to transfer children, the injured and orphans to live in relief camps far away from their homes. When the accommodation was restored to normal, they were able to return.

***Thanks to the efforts of the Salesian group and other organisations, 5 villages, with a total of about 500 households, have begun to return to their normal lives and about 700 acres have been returned to arable cultivation.***

Fr Charles Saw SDB

