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COOPERATORS HOLD FIRST
INTERAMERICAN CONGRESS

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C O N T E N T S

Cooperators Hold First Congress for New Region	3
Educating with the Heart of Don Bosco	10
Fr. Pascual Chavez, SDB	
Youth Culture in the '00s	14
Human Rights with the Heart of Don Bosco	
Salesian Holiness	18
Salesian Sisters Hold General Chapter	20
Around the Salesian U.S.A.	23
Around the Salesian World	26

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COOPERATORS HOLD FIRST CONGRESS FOR NEW REGION

Recapping the Interamerican Experience

By Jim Dolan

In May 2008 the world council of the Association of Salesian Cooperators (ASC) finalized a plan to restructure the ASC regions. Canada and the two provinces of the U.S. were combined with the North Pacific and Caribbean Region to become the new Interamerican Region.

The new Interamerican Region held its first regional congress at Guadalajara and Amatitan, Mexico, Oct. 15-19, 2008, attended by approximately 80 cooperators and delegates from 13 countries, including the Eastern and Western U.S. provinces and Canada.

The congress opened at the Salesian Theological Center of Tlaquepaque with registration and then a Mass presided over by Fr. Salvador Cleo Murguia Villalobos, the provincial of Mexico North, who welcomed us to the congress. After a formal assembly we enjoyed a Mexican fiesta, followed by a dinner with more entertainment. After dinner, we were bused to the meeting site at Amatitan.

At Amatitan, a beautiful mountain retreat amid hills of agave, the work of the congress began in earnest. Each day started with Mass and then moved on to the discussion, presentation, and the approval of congress documents in the spirit of Salesian consensus and unity.

For logistical reasons the congress subdivided the region into North and South areas. The North Area includes



Paula Dolan

Fiesta on the congress's opening day

Canada, U.S. East, and U.S. West, and the South includes the Antilles, Central America North, Central America South, Haiti, Mexico North, and Mexico South

Forming the new region required a number of infrastructure changes. These were well planned by the previous world councilors, Marlene Frederick and Thomas Polanco, working in coordination with the international office in Rome. The congress established a regional structure consisting of a world councilor, a regional executive secretariat responsible for formation, administration, and secretarial services, and representatives for the North and South areas of the region. The congress also established the regional advisory council, made up of the world councilor, the regional executive secretariat, and the region's provincial coordinators. This council is responsible for assisting the world councilor and regional secretariat and for ensuring a smooth flow of communication and imparting more energy to projects undertaken throughout the region.

Mr. Dolan is the Cooperators' Eastern U.S. Province Coordinator.



Paula Dolan

The congress at work

The congress's main work was electing a new world councilor, three regional advisory council members, and persons responsible for the North and South areas, as well as approving several documents necessary for the ongoing work of the region. The elections and approval of documents were completed in a true spirit of cooperation by all attendees.

The documents approved included the "Directives," the document titled "In the Heart of Life: Where Are We?" and the "Goals." The "Goals" address formation, animation, and mission.

The congress, in true Salesian style, was not all work but was liberally spiced with spiritual events and interaction with our new friends at shared meals, fiestas and music! music! music!

Each day of the congress involved not only work but also entertainment by various countries, allowing all of the delegates to showcase their cultures and binding us close together.

On Saturday, Oct. 18, we voted for the new world councilor, regional executive secretariat, and the new representatives for the North and South areas. The world councilor for the Interamerican Region is Herman Lopez Castro, who as coordinator of the Mexico North provincial council hosted the regional meeting.

The two outgoing world councilors, Thomas Polanco and Marlene Frederick, were congratulated for their tireless work over the past seven years.

The three regional advisory council members elected were Angel Orsenigo from El Salvador



The U.S. delegates entertained one evening, including songs and the distribution of some token gifts to all attendees

(administrator), Beatriz Merchant from Mexico (secretary), and Michel Jobin from Canada (formation). The coordinators of the region's provincial councils and the SDB and FMA delegates are also members of the regional advisory council.



Marlene Frederick and Thomas Polanco saying goodbye as members of the ASC world council

The final day of the congress, Sunday, Oct. 19, was filled with a feeling of accomplishment and some sadness as we prepared to leave our new friends. We were consoled, however, by the thought that we would be working together in the future.

In the words of one of our East Coast attendees: “The animation and the

Salesian spirit of joy and friendship were ever present during the congress, from the beautiful meeting location at

Elizabeth Gamarra from the U.S. West Province was elected to represent the North Area, Alberto Padilla from El Salvador to represent the South.

On the morning of the day of the elections, we went as a group into Guadalajara for sightseeing and shopping, followed by a Mass celebrated by Cardinal Juan Sandoval Iniguez. A delicious luncheon followed, with entertainment provided by our now familiar mariachi band.



Paula Dolan

Jim and Paula Dolan at one of the many meals the Cooperators enjoyed at Amatitan

Amatitan, to the food, the parties, the presentations, and the real friendships that we all come home with.”

The first Interamerican Regional Congress was not only a success, but also an important step for us all to work together in a new region of Salesian Cooperators.



Cardinal Sandoval of Guadalajara presides at Mass with the Cooperators. Fr. Romeo Trottier of Canada is second from the right

After representing the U.S. East Province at the congress and having had time to consider what its actions and our new region means to us, I am positive that this multicultural, multilingual Interamerican Region will be a catalyst to propel us further along the road in carrying out the work of our Church in the manner of Don Bosco, for the young and the disadvantaged in our region.

The congress was truly a fresh beginning for the ASC and brings us new hope and new friends to assist us in carrying out our work. Now the challenge is to carry it out.

The Joy of Overcoming the Fear of Change

By Elizabeth Gamarra

Adjusting to change can be challenging. It is not unusual to feel uncomfortable, anticipate that we are going to run into trouble, maybe struggle with the unknown, etc. It is human nature, and most of us accept it as part of a “normal” behavior. Hence the Salesian Cooperators of North America had many concerns cross our minds when we heard of a regional realignment. All we knew was that our provinces were merging with another region made up of many countries that most of us had never worked with, had not met in the past, countries that spoke languages that we did not speak, etc. All of a sudden, we had a lot to absorb!

But, we *are* Salesians...and our great

model is our founder...whose love for those he served was stronger than any personal feelings. St. John Bosco always seemed filled with creativity, a spirit of adventure, resourcefulness, and numerous qualities that reminded us to welcome this change as a new opportunity we could embrace with enthusiasm and



Thomas Dunne, SDB

Liz Gamarra addressing the congress

open-mindedness. So the Canadian, U.S. East, and U.S. West Cooperator delegates packed their bags, procured small gifts for new friends we expected to make, and set off to Guadalajara for the first Interamerican Regional congress with a spirit of adventure!

Our trust paid off because we all experienced an immediate reward! Every one of us found warmth, graciousness, and a generous welcome from everyone involved in planning the event: our hosts, fellow Cooperators from the Mexico North province, the leadership, the FMAs and SDBs from all the countries

Mrs. Gamarra is a member of the provincial council of the Cooperators' U.S. West Province. Marlene Frederick, Carla Comin, Michel Jobin, and Norma Franco contributed to these reflections.

of our new region. They made us feel like old friends whom they were happy to welcome. I think it would take several issues of the *Salesian Bulletin* to try to explain something that cannot be quantified. It is easily understood, though, if I say that the Holy Spirit was in our midst. The Spirit guided us to not only embrace the enormous blessing that this unification was going to bring to our Association, but also to take advantage of the unique opportunity we now have to get to know other members of our Salesian Family, benefit from their experience, share best practices, etc.



The East and West U.S. contingents in Guadalajara on Oct. 18. Front: Maggie Lau, Fr. Jerry Bonjean, Marlene Frederick, Elizabeth Gamarra, Norma Franco. Back: Jim Dolan, Paula Dolan, Fr. Tom Dunne

In an effort to share this experience with the Salesian Family, I asked some of the participants to share their reflections and experiences in three particular areas:

Valuable Lessons Learned at the Congress

- “The regional restructuring was a workable situation that put us on the road to a successful and productive

relationship which could be seen clearly in various cultures and languages meeting, working together, and bonding as a family.”



Paula Dolan

At the congress's opening session, ASC leaders assembled on a platform with flags from all the nations represented

- “We experienced a sense of *unity*. It did not matter what country you were from, what your native language was: we were all united by a common goal, the same Spirit and hope for the future: the *mission* of the Salesian Family.”

- “We *are* a great family regardless of our nationality, financial condition, or educational background. We share the same responsibility of continuing the work of our Founder. We can adapt ourselves to whatever we need to do in light of today's world, yet remain followers of Don Bosco's teachings and spirituality.”

- “I now understand the power of *unity*, especially as it refers to our common priority to serve the young, the poor, and the disadvantaged, wherever they may be.”

- “Our hearts were filled with excitement and joy, and we all felt anxious to meet all the members of our Salesian family. And in the typical Salesian spirit at work, we all felt this was a real family reunion!”

- “Many impressive spiritual experiences—we came full circle. We were able to dialog, embrace, share tears of joy. Our language was not English, Spanish, or French—it was *Salesian*. Our gracious Lord, with his helpmates St. John Bosco and St. Mary Mazzarello, was among us, smiling upon us with glorious sunshine and blessing us.”

- “This was a very impressive spiritual experience. I admired the thoughtfulness, careful planning, and high goals set for this congress by the organizers and the large number of people who worked so hard before, during, and after the congress. The congress delivered a perfect combination of group prayer, constructive work, beautiful music, great food, and *lots of fun!*”

Was Our Salesian Vocation Influenced by This Experience?

- “The congress created a fresh appreciation for the true value and blessedness of being a Salesian; it renewed my enthusiasm to try to be more visible and turn my Salesian presence into a more influential element in my life.”

- “The congress has influenced my vocation in a very positive way. Although my focus is to follow Christ, I realize that

I met Christ through Don Bosco and the Salesian community. It has reaffirmed my conviction that being a Salesian *is* my vocation. There is a lot to be done; we have a lot of young people in need of our Salesian vocation and spirit of service.”



The retreat house at Amatitan provided a serene setting for the Cooperators' work

- “It reminded me that Don Bosco was the first to recognize the talents and gifts of lay people, and that is why he wanted to form the Cooperators. Now there are more than 30,000 Cooperators in the world following his example, inspired by his charism, working for the causes he chose as our priorities.”

- “The congress was a burst of energy for my vocation. Being together makes us stronger and motivates us to *do more, give more*, and truly find our Association to be the strong *movement* that we can be.”

*How the New Regional Structure
May Affect Our Own Centers,
Provinces, and Area*

• “I foresee a closer bonding and strategic development in all areas as a stronger network of communication is put into place. As ideas are shared and more personal contacts are established, our North Area should realize new heights of Salesianity.”

• “Being divided into two areas makes the new region less intimidating. After meeting with the representatives of the North Area, I am also confident that it will be a great opportunity for the involvement and growth at all levels of the ASC.”

• “It will certainly be a challenge for us to integrate various cultures and languages, but I am confident we can make it work, based on our own experience during the congress. Now it will be the task of all Cooperators to make the integration happen at all levels of our Association, through better communications and similar missions, guided by the Rector Major’s annual strennas.”

• “Our region is very rich in many aspects: rich because of its cultural diversity, traditions, and languages. But we are all united by the same mission. This new regional structure, with the light that the Holy Spirit will provide to us, can show us new opportunities to serve and new ways of serving. Let’s always remember what the Oratory of Don Bosco intended to do and let’s be the home that welcomes people, the Church that evangelizes, and the

playground where we meet friends.”

• “I think that we have the right infrastructure in place to continue to grow and strengthen our movement. The responsibilities have been distributed and given to very capable hands that form a strong team. Our “Directives” and “Goals” for the next six years are realistic and reflective of how the SDB 26th General Chapter wants to get the participation of every member of the Salesian Family.”

• “The value of interacting with the Cooperators from many diverse countries at the congress has been and still is an uplifting experience and a positive re-affirmation of our collective Salesian vocation for us as Salesian Cooperators. With our own support and prayers and those of many new and old friends, we feel equipped and ready to go home and bring the Salesian animation to our families, parishes, local centers, provincial councils, and everyone we work with.”

We ask all the readers of the *Salesian Bulletin U.S.A.* to keep the ASC in your prayers. We encourage anyone interested in becoming a Salesian Cooperator to contact one of our local centers for further information, or contact <http://www.salesiancooperators.catholicweb.com/> >

Educating with the Heart of Don Bosco

By Pascual Chavez, SDB

The Social Significance of Salesian Education

“If I want ... to feel that the dropouts and the drug addicts, those without work and without hope, are my brothers, not *a different species*; if I want to translate Christianity into action, into social action, and I might say, into a *sanctified socialist action* ... if I want to relate in a way that is not paternalistic but fatherly, not authoritarian but authoritative, not repressive but understanding, not one of communication but of communion ... I know well that I need to turn to Don Bosco” (Italo Alighiero Chiusano).

We know the origins of Salesian work. Don Bosco himself described the first boys at the Oratory: “As a rule the Oratory boys included stonecutters, bricklayers, stuccoers, road pavers, plasterers, and others

who came from distant villages. They were not church-goers, and had few friends; so they were exposed to the dangers of perversion.” Those aimed at in Don Bosco’s charism, therefore, are the neediest youngsters, children of the people, from the working class.

In his circular letter “He had compassion on them,” Fr. Juan Vecchi (Rector Major, 1996-2002) draws attention to the new scenario for the educational work of the Salesians: “Economic, social and cultural factors are bringing about a new configuration of societies. Hence the priorities of our mission are also changing, at least to some extent: the subjects to whom we give preference, the gospel messages to be disseminated and the educational

programs to be set in motion.” The old and the new forms of poverty among the young are a constant challenge to the creativity of the charism and its contemporary implementation.

Often on the TV screen we see images, aspects, and effects of poverty, such as *hunger*; the exodus of thousands of *refugees* who are victims of ethnic conflicts, religious discrimination,



Nino Musio

wars about spheres of influence. We see the process of unstable urbanization, which creates the phenomena of *urban marginalization, immigration, child labor, women in precarious situations, the sexual exploitation of minors, child soldiers*, etc. This is painting a black picture, but it is an incomplete one. Concern for “*the least*” is always present in the formulation of our plans, understanding that *the least* means youngsters at risk, youngsters living in economic, cultural, and religious poverty, the poor in affective, moral, and spiritual terms, those suffering on account of family problems, youngsters living on the margins of society and of the Church.

n **The first response is the work of education** with these young people. The Salesian charism continues to write glorious pages in history, setting in motion vast social programs of prevention and assistance on all the continents: in refugee camps, with street children, in the rehabilitation of child-soldiers and sexually exploited youngsters, in a great variety



Child laborers in India

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of projects on behalf of emigrants. The educational worth of the Preventive System shows its effectiveness in putting wayward youngsters onto the right path, and when they have already embarked on the wrong one in helping them not to make worse choices.

We have to avoid a certain “*fashionability of the poor*,” however, which becomes demagoguery and leads us to *talk* about the poor without *doing* anything for them. It is impossible to teach the values of compassion and solidarity from a standpoint of the satisfied and the powerful, nor from a neutral standpoint. In order to educate to solidarity and justice, it is necessary to assume the place of the “victims” in society. The Church has always seen in the poor “a theological place of encounter with God.” Following a Gospel-based interpretation of the situation of Latin America, in Puebla in 1979 the bishops of Latin America affirmed “the need for the conversion of the whole Church to a preferential option for the poor in view of their complete liberation.”



A refugee camp in Darfur, Sudan



Street children in Manila

ANS

n **The accelerating speed of change**, the giddy rhythm with which events follow one after another, can result in a certain deadening of our sensitivities or those of the young. It is necessary to find “the appropriate pedagogical means” to keep the heart always open to the *cry of life* in search of survival and dignity. It is here that education has to say something *critical* as a means of analyzing the situation and of removing all that does not appear to be just.

In the face of an individualistic world that is not open to the needs of others, education has to work to overcome indifference and to reawaken feelings of concern for social issues, help people to become more aware of the world around us and learn how to assess it critically and feel responsible for and become active agents in what happens, taking part in proposing answers that go beyond recourse to violence.

Poverty and marginalization are phenomena that are not just economic; rather, they concern the conscience and challenge society’s way of thinking. Therefore, moral education and education in general should be seen as something of real urgency in a society in which the great problems of the human race and the principles that govern relationships between people and nations, and our relationship with the natural environment, require new ethical and moral guidelines rather than technical and scientific solutions. >



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In East Timor, Bro. Adriano DeJesus coordinates distribution of aid to the poor.

The Salesian Cooperators

Ordinary People...



Extraordinary Vocation!



Founded by St. John Bosco in 1876, we number over 30,000 members worldwide and are growing all the time! We are men and women just like you, of all ages and from all walks of life, called by God to serve the local Church in the Salesian spirit. Our vocation is one of presence and service to the young and to the poor. In the words of our founder, Don Bosco, "A Salesian Cooperator is one who, in a practical way, promotes morality and contributes to society." If you feel that God may be calling you to join us in this rewarding work, simply contact us by phone or email – there is no obligation. You have nothing to lose and a worldwide family to gain. We look forward to hearing from you!

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Youth Culture in the '00s

Human Rights with the Heart of Don Bosco

By Judy Wilber Alvarez

In “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility,” the Catholic bishops of the United States remind us, “In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation” (no. 13). (For numerous resources on faithful citizenship, see the USCCB website <http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org/>)



Faithful Citizenship

USCCB

The decisions we have made and will make as citizens regarding leadership and future policies have important moral and ethical dimensions. As citizens we need to guide our political choices not by party affiliation but by moral principals, the defense of human life, the needs of the most vulnerable, and the pursuit of the common good. We need to anchor our commitment to defend human

life and other human rights to the fundamental obligation of respecting each person’s dignity as a child of God. If leaders do not align with our convictions, we need to work at influencing their public policies.

As Salesians we are called to do this and more. We hold dear the rights of children everywhere. As educators formed with the heart of Don Bosco, we recognize that all God’s children have the right to full human development. We seek to make ourselves aware of places and circumstances where their rights are compromised.

In our country alone many young people are suffering poverty, lack good education and health care, are victimized by violence in their homes, on the streets, in schools, prisons, and sweatshops. They are subjected to human trafficking and unjust immigration laws.

These same problems and more are readily found in the global village, where youngsters are also coerced as child soldiers or become refugees and orphans due to war and/or disease. So many youth misfortunes ought to weigh on our conscience. Young people desperately need advocates and guides to lead them from being vulnerable people who

Duoc Le

Mrs. Alvarez is a member of the San Francisco Province Youth Ministry Team and animates various initiatives of the Province Youth Ministry Office.



Members of the Salesian Family who participated in the Southern California conference on human rights of the young at Don Bosco Tech in Rosemead on Nov. 8

require protection, to being people who have rights and recognize the rights of others, enabling them to be the faithful citizens of tomorrow.

Each member of the Salesian Family, as an educator with the heart of Don Bosco, is called to be a defender, promoter, and activist for the human rights of young people. In doing so we will be not only Salesians but also faithful citizens in a society that so needs the transforming presence of God's love.

Our Rector Major, Fr. Pascual Chavez, urges us: "Human rights education, especially children's rights, is the privileged way to bring about in different contexts the commitment to prevention, holistic human development, and the creation of a fairer, sounder, and more just world."

The San Francisco Province has responded to the Rector Major's appeal by drawing up a detailed human rights curriculum for use in all the province's schools, parishes, and youth centers. The province has followed up with two regional conferences to promote human

rights, especially the rights of the young.

The Salesian Family of the San Francisco Province gathered in northern and southern California for regional conferences in November 2008, on human rights and Salesian spirituality. The conference theme, "With the Heart of Don Bosco," was concretized through keynotes and workshops which educated over 130 participants to human rights and raised awareness of the abuse of the rights of so many in the human family. Participants were not left without hope but were equipped with understanding and resources to live and act in solidarity with those in need.

The keynote speaker for both conferences was Fr. Thomas Brennan, SDB, the United Nations representative for the Salesians of Don Bosco in their capacity as a recognized non-governmental organization. Uniting his Salesian heart with knowledge gained through work at the UN, Fr. Brennan urged all to be responsive to the exploited and marginalized, remembering in a particular way children whose lives are severely

compromised. Fr. Brennan told the many youths in attendance that they can be the generation to end global poverty, should they choose to work for it. He challenged them to shake off the indifference that is the greatest obstacle to achieving the end of so much suffering in the world today.

To educate participants on human rights, Fr. Brennan traced how the understanding of human rights has evolved through time and experience from the rights of liberty to equality to fraternity. The understanding of fraternity—the contemporary word might be *solidarity*—touches “rights that are affected by the behavior of other nations and that are enshrined in international law, and the protection of the environment. These rights include: the right to self-determination; to economic and social development; to a healthy environment; to natural resources; to communication; to participation in cultural heritage; to intergenerational equity.” As a result, leading human rights thinkers speak more now about responsibility for one another and not just about rights. True fraternity demands that we take responsibility for the common good and distribute resources accordingly. Challenging complacency, Fr. Brennan said, “As long as we do not take seriously our obligation to be our brother and sister’s keeper, human rights will continue to be violated. Our indifference and silence are the problem.”

Such indifference is not possible for



Fr. Tom Brennan delivers the keynote at the Southern California conference

Duoc Le

true members of the Salesian Family. Fr. Brennan declared: “Our Salesian charism demands that we work to protect the human rights of all, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized. Don Bosco saw the abuse of young people during his time and did all he could to protect the young and to give them opportunities to acquire skills.”

Fr. Brennan reiterated the urgent words of Fr. Chavez: “The situation in which many young people find themselves in many parts of the world is very serious: young people at risk and marginalized. There are so many of them, too many of them. Their cry goes unheard. They weigh on the conscience of a society that is seeking to globalize the economy, but not the commitment to the development of peoples and the

promotion of the dignity of each human being.... Such misfortune weighs on everyone's conscience. At the end of the 25th General Chapter the Salesians made an appeal addressed to all those with responsibilities regarding the young: 'Before it is too late, let us save the youngsters, the future of the world.'"

Mindful of this appeal, participants at both California conferences participated in a variety of workshops designed to deepen their understanding of human rights and Salesian spirituality. The workshops included two presentations by Catholic Relief Services, one on their initiative called *Food Fast: Migration, Poverty and Hunger*, and the other on global solidarity illustrated through the story of Thomas Awaipo, a CRS representative, who shared his personal experience of hunger and hope in Ghana.

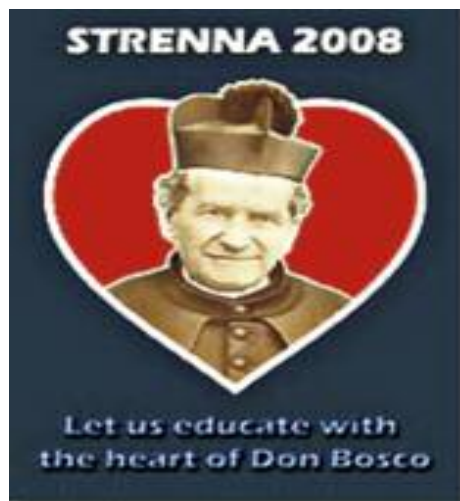
Other speakers addressed the identity of immigrant youth, the promotion of human rights for the young, the fundamental elements needed for healthy adolescent development, and how to educate with the heart of Don Bosco. Workshops were also offered in Spanish and Vietnamese, honoring the multicultural reality of the Salesian Family along the Pacific Rim.

A unique element of the conference was a workshop offered for youth, which prepared them for the Province Youth Summit, Feb. 13-15. On that weekend youth representatives from province communities will offer their expertise from research done with other youths on

immigration and human trafficking. This encounter is designed for youths to provide their collective reflection and recommendations on how the San Francisco Province should respond to these issues in the years ahead.

Both full-day conferences ended with a prayer service to deepen everyone's resolve to learn more and act on their growing awareness of human rights. In the words of the Rector Major, "Education to human rights is education to action, to doing something, to taking up a position, to accepting responsibility, to critical analysis, to being informed, to weighing information coming from the media; it is an education that has to become permanent and daily." All of which begs the question that Fr. Brennan asked, "Will we take up the Rector Major's challenge?"

With the heart of Don Bosco, may we each respond, "Yes!" >



SALESIAN HOLINESS

Causes of Two Salesians Move Ahead

By ANS

The Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, meeting at Lviv, Ukraine, Sept. 2-9, agreed to ask the Salesians to introduce the process for the beatification and canonization of **Fr. Stepan Czmil**, the first Ukrainian Salesian priest of the Byzantine-Ukrainian Rite.

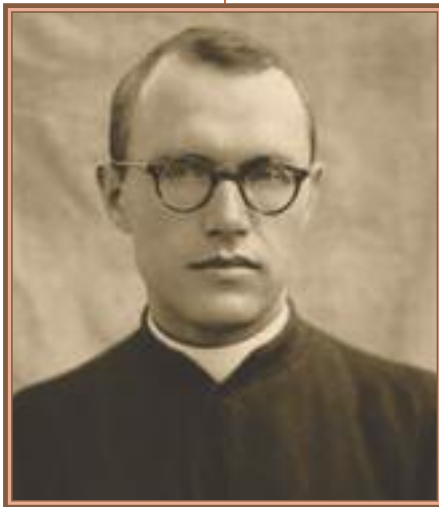
Fr. Czmil, born in 1914 at Sudova Vyshnia, Ukraine, left his country in 1932 on account of the religious and political difficulties to which Soviet rule had subjected his nation.

With other young men he went to a Salesian aspirantate in Italy, and after his novitiate year made his religious profession in 1936. He studied theology in Rome and was ordained in 1945.

Unable to return to Ukraine, he left as a missionary for Argentina for some years. When he returned to Italy, he was appointed rector of the Pontifical Junior Seminary for Ukrainian boys in exile (1961-1967 and 1976-1978).

About 20 years after his death on Jan. 22, 1978, Pope John Paul II recognized that he had been secretly but validly ordained bishop on April 4, 1977, together with two other priests by Ukrainian Cardinal Josyf Slipij.

Cardinal Lubomir Husar, major archbishop of Kiev and president of the Synod of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, knew Fr. Czmil. He testifies: "Fr. Stepan was so holy that his holiness did not appear; it was in fact deep within him and it flowed from him, throwing its light on



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those who came in contact with him.... To speak of the reputation for holiness of Fr. Stepan is more than right and proper because he really was a saint!"

Bishop Andriy Sapelak, SDB, retired bishop of the Ukrainians in Argentina, has written: "He is a small piece in the mosaic of the holiness of our people; through Fr. Stepan we shall be enriching ourselves with the holiness of Don Bosco, who with his inspirational

holiness opened the doors of holiness not only to religious, martyrs, and the faithful but especially to the young, following the example of 14-year-old St. Dominic Savio, his pupil.”

On Nov. 12, 2008, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints published a decree on the heroicity of the life and virtues of **Sr. Maria Troncatti, FMA**. The decree was signed by Abp. Angelo Amato, prefect of the Congregation, and Bp. Michele DiRuberto, secretary, at the Vatican in the presence of the new FMA Superior General, Mother Yvonne Reungoat, the FMA general council, other FMAs, and the postulator general of the Salesian Family, Fr. Enrico dal Covolo.

Sr. Maria becomes the ninth member of the Salesian Family presently titled “Venerable.” She was born at Corteno Golgi (Brescia), Italy, on Feb. 16, 1883, and worked as a missionary among the Shuar people of southeastern Ecuador

from 1925 until her death in a plane crash on Aug. 25, 1969. She undertook an enormous work of evangelization in the midst of all kinds of dangers. She was a nurse, surgeon, orthopedist, dentist, and anesthetist; but above all she was an exceptional catechist, full of faith,

patience, and Salesian loving kindness. She worked effectively for the emancipation of the Shuar women. Upon her death the radio of the Shuar Federation reported sadly, “Sr. Maria Troncatti, our little mother, is dead...”

A miracle has been credited to Sr. Troncatti’s intercession in the archdiocese of Portoviejo, Ecuador. The acts of the diocesan enquiry into

that alleged cure are now at the Congregation for the Causes of Saints for study. If the Congregation concludes that a miracle did indeed occur and Pope Benedict XVI concurs, the heroic missionary of the Shuar will be beatified. >



Salesian Sisters

Salesian Sisters Hold General Chapter, Elect New Mother General

By the FMA Press Office (Rome) and Louise Passero, FMA (U.S.)



Mother General Yvonne Reungoat, FMA

Sr. Yvonne Reungoat was elected Superior General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMAs) on Oct. 24, 2008, during their 22nd General Chapter. She was vicar general for the last six years. In the words of the FMA Constitutions, she will serve as the mother of all the Salesian Sisters and will be their “bond of communion and center of unity.” She will ensure fidelity to their spiritual heritage, be attentive to the needs of the Church, and animate the sisters according to the spirit of Mornese, the Piedmontese village where the FMAs were born in 1872.

There are 14,115 FMAs carrying out educational, social, and missionary apostolates on six continents.

The Sisters’ chapter, with 191 FMAs from around the world, opened on Sept. 18 at their generalate in Rome. The

outgoing Superior General, Mother Antonia Colombo, presided over it until her successor’s election. The chapter theme was “Called to be, today, a sign and expression of the foreseeing love of God.”

In her remarks at the opening of the chapter, Mother Colombo noted how World Youth Day 2008 demonstrated that young people are looking for an essential foundation for their lives: “They want to hear strong teaching based on Gospel truths.... They are open to more human ways of being free individuals, capable of love and of working for the common good. They need people in whom they can believe, who speak to their hearts and minds in ways they can understand, ... who open them up to the grace of conversion.” It is the mission of the FMAs to transmit



Mother Colombo (left) and Fr. Chavez at Mornese during the sisters’ pre-chapter retreat

to the young an appreciation for life and for love, Mother Colombo said. “The certainty of being filled with the love of God enables us to be its signs and expression.”

From Oct. 25 to 28 the chapter also elected the vicar general, six councilors for special sectors, and seven visiting councilors.

The general council resembles a mini-United Nations because of the different countries represented, mirroring the international aspect of the FMAs. Their average age is 58. Three have been missionaries. For the first time sisters from Ireland, Mexico, Slovenia, and Uruguay will serve on the council.

Sr. Emilia Musatti of Italy, formerly a visiting councilor, was elected vicar general. She is the first of the general councilors and the primary collaborator

with Mother General in the task of animating the life and fidelity of the sisters.

Sr. Maria Americo Rolim, from Brazil, was re-elected councilor for formation. She oversees the FMA novitiates and other formation communities.

Sr. Alaíde Deretti, also a Brazilian and previously a visiting councilor, was elected councilor for the missions. She is responsible for fostering FMA missionary activity.

Sr. Giuseppina Teruggi (Italy) was re-elected councilor for communications and Sr. María del Carmen Canales (Spain) re-elected councilor for youth ministry.

Sr. Vilma Tallone (Italy), who has spent 25 years in Africa, was elected bursar general, responsible for the FMAs’ material goods. Sr. Maria Luisa Miranda (Mexico) was elected councilor for the Salesian Family.



Lucy Rocces, FMA

The new general council of the Salesian Sisters

The seven visiting councilors go to the different provinces to meet the sisters and young people as representatives of Mother General and the general council.

Sr. Marie Dominique Mwema Mukato (Congo), who carried out the visitations of the U.S. and Canadian province last summer and fall, was re-elected, as was Sr. Carla Castellino (Italy).

The newly elected visitors are Sr. Lucy Rose Ozhukail (India), Sr. Silvia Boullosa (Uruguay), Sr. Chiara Cazzuola, (Italy), Sr. Kathleen Taylor (Ireland), and Sr. Marija Pece (Slovenia).

Mother Yvonne and the general council asked Sr. Piera Cavaglia to continue as secretary general, the responsibility she has filled since 2002.

On Nov. 15, Mother Reungoat closed GC22 by telling the sisters, “The doors of this Cenacle are ready to be thrown open.” She was comparing the chapter hall to the Upper Room where the apostles “were called together by the Lord, listened to his word, experienced communion,” and with Mary in their

midst received the Holy Spirit. From there they went forth to preach the Gospel, “to become the expression of God’s love,” like the co-founders of the FMAs, St. John Bosco and St. Mary Mazzarello.

FMA priorities for the next six years, said Mother Reungoat, include concern for young women, “who are often overwhelmed and crushed in their dignity and their future”; accompaniment of the family in its mission of education; preparation for voluntary service; and helping young women make a vocational choice.

Fr. Pascual Chavez celebrated the chapter’s closing Mass. He led the sisters in “deepest thanksgiving to God” for the graces of GC22. His homily invited the FMAs to face the challenge of “being the salt and light of the earth,” giving witness to Christ through personal holiness, a sense of community, and an appreciation for authentic beauty in a world often deceived by false forms of beauty. >

At the end of GC22, Mother Reungoat gave the chapter members pens to express their commitment to re-write the FMA charism in the countries where they work



Around the Salesian U.S.A.

Fr. Ubaldo Chueca, SDB, Dies in San Francisco

After two years of suffering with cancer, Fr. Ubaldo Chueca (1938-2008) died peacefully in San Francisco on Oct. 21.

Fr. Chueca was born in Lima, Peru, on May 7, 1938. He joined the Salesians in 1957. His education included a graduate degree in education from the Pontifical University of Lima and studies in theology and psychology at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome. After his ordination in 1966, Fr. Chueca served in Salesian schools and parishes in Peru, including the offices of principal and director. He was also vice provincial.

Fr. Chueca came to the U.S. in 1998 to minister to the Spanish-speaking population. He served in Salesian parishes in Laredo, Los Angeles, Watsonville, and San Francisco

(Corpus Christi). He was much loved by the people for his understanding of their cultures and his concern for their social and religious needs.

One parishioner whom Fr. Chueca helped expressed his appreciation for Father's having been a wonderful priest at Mass, in the sacrament of Reconciliation, and as an advisor. He also noted Fr. Chueca's works of charity and even trips to the California missions.

-- Thomas Prendiville, SDB



San Francisco Province



Duoc Le

With other San Francisco Province jubilarians backing them, Fr. Mario Mich and Fr. Austin Conterno teamed up to cut an anniversary cake. Frs. Mich and Conterno celebrated their 60th anniversary of ordination and 70th as Salesians at a solemn Mass for all the jubilarians at Sts. Peter and Paul Church in San Francisco on Sept. 28—followed, of course, by a party in the parish hall



Sixteen of a total of twenty-two priest and brother jubilarians of the New Rochelle Province gathered around Fr. Provincial after a Mass of Thanksgiving at the Marian Shrine in Haverstraw-Stony Point on Oct. 12. They celebrated jubilees ranging from 25 years of profession or ordination up to 75 years of profession

Don Bosco Students Join Fight Against Poverty

On Oct. 17, the United Nations observed International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. People living in poverty and all those who oppose social and economic exclusion gathered throughout the world to express solidarity and renew their commitment to work to ensure that everyone's dignity and freedom are respected.

Observance began on the evening of Oct. 16 with the performance of the *Poverty Requiem* in 20 different places as part of the Stand Up/Take Action worldwide event, which honored the courage and strength of those who live in poverty and at which nearly 67 million people pledged to fight poverty in their communities.

Events at UN headquarters in New York were led by the representatives of ATD Fourth World, a movement founded by Fr. Joseph Wresinki, and included a commemoration in which those living in poverty shared the stage with government leaders, as well as an interactive round-table discussion on human rights and the dignity of persons living in poverty.

Fr. Thomas Brennan, the SDB representative at the UN, was involved in planning these activities, and he also headed a delegation of students from Don Bosco Prep in Ramsey, N.J., who were present for the activities. Fr. Louis Molinelli, director of Don Bosco, and Jeff Moeller, faculty advisor to the

Model UN program at Don Bosco, also participated. The students left the events better informed and also committed to making the goal of these days happen.

-- Thomas Brennan, SDB



Mr. Moeller, Fr. Louis Molinelli, Fr. Thomas Brennan (standing) with students from Don Bosco Prep at the UN

General Councilor Carries Out Consultations



Bob Magroan for
Salesian Communications

Salesians from New Jersey, New York, Washington, and Massachusetts met with Fr. Ortiz in Orange, N.J., on Nov. 16

In November Fr. Esteban Ortiz, general councilor for the Interamerica Region, carried out consultations among the SDBs of both U.S. provinces and the Canadian Vice Province. The terms of the American provincials, Frs. David Purdy and James Heuser, will end on June 30, 2009, and the Salesian Rule requires that the confreres have input before the Rector Major appoints new provincials. All the SDBs in each province were urged to attend a consultation session with Fr. Ortiz at one of seven sites in the provinces. They offered both oral and written recommendations about the qualities needed in a provincial superior and suggested the

names of priests whom the Rector Major might name.

A separate consultation in the New Rochelle Province and Canadian Vice Province concerned the merger of these two jurisdictions, expected to take place on July 1, 2009. The confreres were asked about the potential benefits and challenges they see coming from such a merger. Like their brothers south of the 49th parallel, the Canadian SDBs were consulted about the provincial who will take office in the combined province, which will encompass all of Canada and the eastern half of the U.S.

-- Michael Mendl, SDB

Around the Salesian World

Salesians Care for Congo Refugees

In the Kivu region of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the central government and a powerful rebel army have been fighting a civil war for many months, seeking to control the region's vast mineral wealth. According to Catholic News Service, since the 1990s, warring militias in Congo have killed nearly 6 million people and displaced more than 2 million.

UN agencies estimate that refugees in North Kivu at the end of November numbered more than 1.6 million. Tens of thousands have fled to Goma, the capital of North Kivu, including many forced out of refugee camps elsewhere by the fighting.

For over 20 years the Don Bosco Center in the Ngangi section of Goma has been a focal point for children in difficulty or at risk. There are usually youngsters from all tribal groups and from distant parts of the country. In recent months the numbers reached about 3,000 boys and girls including boarders and externs. Among these are some child soldiers and a dozen girls who had been raped, with their new-born babies.

The Center has taken in hundreds of refugees while continuing to care for



Refugees at the Don Bosco Center in Goma

children who were already there. The three SDBs, two FMAs, and four Italian volunteers from VIS have refused to leave. Fr. Mario Perez, the director, says: "It is impossible to take the children away from the city. We have opened the doors of the Center to all the refugees who want to come in. Many of the children are suffering from dysentery and malnutrition."

The refugees at Don Bosco stay in the large sheds usually used for Sunday Mass; they have sheet metal roofs and solid brick walls. The refugees are given food and water twice a day and medical assistance. Gavin Braschi, the director of VIS projects in Goma, reports: "Every day the 3,800 children and youngsters are going to school. Lessons are given on a regular basis; all the teachers are there. At lunch

time they all eat, often the only meal of the day. To these mouths another 1,000 refugees welcomed at the Center have been added. But no one has had to go without a meal.”

In fact, by Nov. 15 the Center had received 1,448 refugees. Of these, 1,092 are children—111 of them unaccompanied, having lost their parents in hasty flight.

On Nov. 12 various missionary congregations, as well as NGOs and other organizations present in North Kivu and the surrounding areas, acting through the male and female unions of superiors general in Rome, set up the Congo Intercongregational Emergency Commission (CIEG). Among the missionary congregations committed to CIEG are the Salesians, Sacred Heart Fathers, Pauline Sisters, Jesuit Refugee Service, Missionaries of Africa, Xaverians, Barnabites, and Carmelites.

CIEG undertakes to gather and coordinate information, appeals, and initiatives and, especially, to develop a “single coordinated strategy” for addressing the humanitarian crisis. This may include



Refugees in one of the “beds” at Goma

pressure on the media, writing letters to politicians and bishops, collecting funds, fast days, demonstrations and marches, and a documentary information center to ensure accurate facts and figures about the conflict. The Vidimus Dominum Web site (<http://vidimusdominum.info/en/>) has opened a special section for documents, interviews, and general information.

On Nov. 9 Reuters carried a story on the Salesians in Goma: <http://www.reuters.com/article/email/idUSL9710053>

-- ANS

Salesian Kick Off Project Europe

The SDBs’ 26th General Chapter last spring called for a “Project Europe,” akin to the great missionary thrust of Project Africa in the 1980s and 1990s, to relaunch the Salesian charism and help revitalize Catholicism in Europe. Pope Benedict XVI endorsed the idea.

Toward that end, the 33 SDB provincials of Europe met Nov. 27-30 at the SDB Generalate in Rome with the Rector Major, members of the general council and central departments, and representatives of the

FMA’s and of NGOs.

The provincials had sent in their reflections, objectives, strategies, and other suggestions beforehand, which Fr. Chavez synthesized. He proposed three strategic options. The first is for the Salesians to re-establish a strong presence among the young, revitalize the formation of young Salesians, and commit themselves to spreading the Salesian charism among lay people and co-workers. The second is to restructure the Salesian presence in



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apostolic project: “We are well-prepared: with a strong and attractive spiritual heritage, a mission to youth and ordinary people that is more than ever relevant, an educational preventive system, and a dynamic

Europe, aiming for social visibility and developing schools and vocational training programs. The third is to consider Europe missionary territory.

“Project Europe is a spiritual enterprise without equal,” the Rector Major said. “What is at stake is the spiritual and cultural recovery of a continent that is now non-Christian.” To meet the challenge, he said, a strong Salesian spirituality is required, a strong formation program, and open and understanding Salesian communities.

In a homily on Nov. 29, Bishop Adrian van Luyn, SDB, of Rotterdam, president of the Commission of the Bishops Conferences of the European Community, referred to the Church’s task of examining the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. In the present crisis of values in Europe, he said, the Church’s “social doctrine offers a contribution of realism and hope.” In forming “upright citizens and good Christians” for contemporary Europe, Don Bosco’s family needs to give attention to educating people to their moral, professional, and social responsibilities.

Bishop Van Luyn encouraged the provincials and the Salesian Family—religious, Cooperators, past pupils, the Salesian Pontifical University, and the FMAs’ Auxilium University—to unite in a common

youth ministry based on relationships.”

Magdi Cristiano Allam, a prominent journalist and recent convert to Christianity, also addressed the gathering. Educated by the SDBs in Egypt, he was impressed by their deep commitment to their mission and their concern for individuals. They led him to understand that Christianity is not only a doctrine, but also an encounter with people who are witnesses to Jesus. The secret to being true Christians, Mr. Allam insisted, is being witnesses.

Two inseparably linked values, Mr. Allam said, are truth and freedom. From them flow the non-negotiable values of life, family, and religious freedom. By ignoring these, Europe has lost its soul since there are no values guiding its progress. The solution is authentic Christian witness. Witnesses to faith and reason will reconstruct civilization, Mr. Allam asserted.



The Rector Major presided over the closing Mass of the European provincials meeting

The meeting ended on Nov. 30 with reports on how to revitalize Salesian presence from within, restructure the Salesian presence, and treat Europe as mission territory. Special attention will be given to Salesian schools, vocational training, a more

demanding formation to religious and Salesian life, coordination of European NGOs, and the need for a research center regarding European youth.

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Open Persecution of Christians in India

Islamic terrorism is not the only form of terror afflicting Indians. An anti-Christian rampage in the state of Orissa made world news for several weeks during the fall. The Catholic Bishops Conference of India (DBCI) also reported attacks on churches in the states of Kerala, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh. In Uttar Pradesh a priest was murdered.



Vincent Castilino, SDB

Fr. Thomas Pallithanam, SDB, with refugees at the Don Bosco Mission in Ravulapalem, Andhra Pradesh State

According to DBCI, thousands of Christians have been attacked in Orissa, rendered homeless, their homes ransacked, looted, burned to the ground. Well over

4,000 homes have been destroyed, 100 or more churches and institutions, 14 rectories and convents; 38 people have been killed, more than 22,000 have become refugees, and another 40,000+ have just fled to the forests. This is persecution on a massive scale. The perpetrators proclaim openly that they wish to eradicate Christianity from Orissa.

Orissa's population is 40 million, of whom 40% are lower-class. The nearly 1 million Christians are mostly lower-class, and they are being forced under threat of torture and death to convert to Hinduism. It appears to be communal violence based on religious factors but, says DBCI, the serious undercurrent is really caste conflict.

The Catholic Church has responded with relief measures for the victims and social advocacy. DBCI has sought to bring national political pressure to bear and has laid the matter before the UN Human Rights Commission.

-- *austraLasia*

Salesians Contribute to Synod on the Word of God

About 250 bishops from around the world took part in the Synod of Bishops on "The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church," Oct. 5-26. The synod included bishops elected by episcopal conferences or chosen by the Holy Father.

Several superiors of religious orders and experts on Scripture also took part.

Four SDB cardinals, seven SDB bishops, Fr. Pascual Chavez, and two SDB university professors were members of the synod. Abp. Thomas Menampampil, SDB, of

Guwahati, India, was selected to make the presentation at the beginning of the synod on the Word of God in Asia. The synod elected Cardinal Oscar

Rodriguez, SDB, of Tegucigalpa,

Honduras, and Abp. Menamparampil as part of the 12-man committee to draw up the message published at the synod's conclusion.

On Oct. 11 Fr. Chavez addressed the synod, emphasizing the meaning of the Word of God for the young. He used the example of the Risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus to show how the young can encounter God's Word, be inspired by it, and be led to closer communion with Christ. He said the Emmaus



Cardinal Joseph Zen, SDB, bishop of Hong Kong, speaking about his experience at the synod

story offers a method for the evangelization of the young: walking side by side. “The young need a Church which is close to their problems and their worries, which not only shares their journey and their

fatigue, but also knows how to talk to them, accepting their uncertainties,” he said.

Later, Fr. Chavez thanked the SDBs who took part in the synod for their contribution to the Church. Their efforts show they are followers of Don Bosco, who used to say, “Any kind of exertion is light when it is a question of the Church and the Papacy.”

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139th Missionary Expedition Sent Forth

On Sept. 28 Fr. Pascual Chavez presented missionary crosses to 28 SDBs, 7 FMAs, and 37 lay missionaries in the basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. The lay volunteers, who include a married couple with young children, are committing themselves to one or two years' service, while the religious intend to remain in their mission destinations. This group is the 139th Salesian missionary expedition since 1875.

Fr. Chavez recalled that the missionary mandate is an absolute priority for all the baptized, “servants and apostles of Christ Jesus.” Noting that 2009 will mark the 150th anniversary of the Salesian Congregation, the Rector Major asked

for at least 100 volunteers for next year's expedition, including one from each province. He told the missionaries, “Your commitment to the mission and the Holy Eucharist are your path of sanctification.”

The new missionaries' departure was preceded by a two-week formation course in Rome and a pilgrimage to the Salesian “holy places” in Turin, Genoa, and Mornese.

The formation course, organized by the Missions Department of the SDB Generalate, offered elements of theology, anthropology, missionary spirituality, and reflection on Don Bosco the missionary that should be helpful to the missionaries, all of whom are volunteers. They also



attended to practical matters like contacts with their assigned provinces, visas, and possible language courses.

There are presently ten SDBs and two FMAs from the U.S. provinces serving in the foreign missions.

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A Province with a Missionary Heart

The province of Vietnam celebrated Salesian Missionary Day at the provincial house in Saigon on Nov. 7. Over 300 took part, including SDBs, representatives of the Salesian Family, parents of missionaries, and Fr. Vaclav Klement, general councilor for the missions. There was a lively presence of Salesians in initial formation, novices, and postnovices.

Among the day's events were a conference on "Don Bosco's Missionary Heart," an artistic program by SDBs and FMAs in formation, and Mass. During the celebration five SDBs presented letters to Fr. Klement expressing their readiness to go on the missions.

From the Vietnamese province 40 missionaries have departed for foreign countries in the last nine years. "The missionary animation and generosity of this province is reflected in an abundance of vocations," Fr. Klement acknowledged. "The 40 prenovices and the 36 novices are the fruit of the pastoral work of seven

vocation centers which accompany 450 aspirants, all university students."

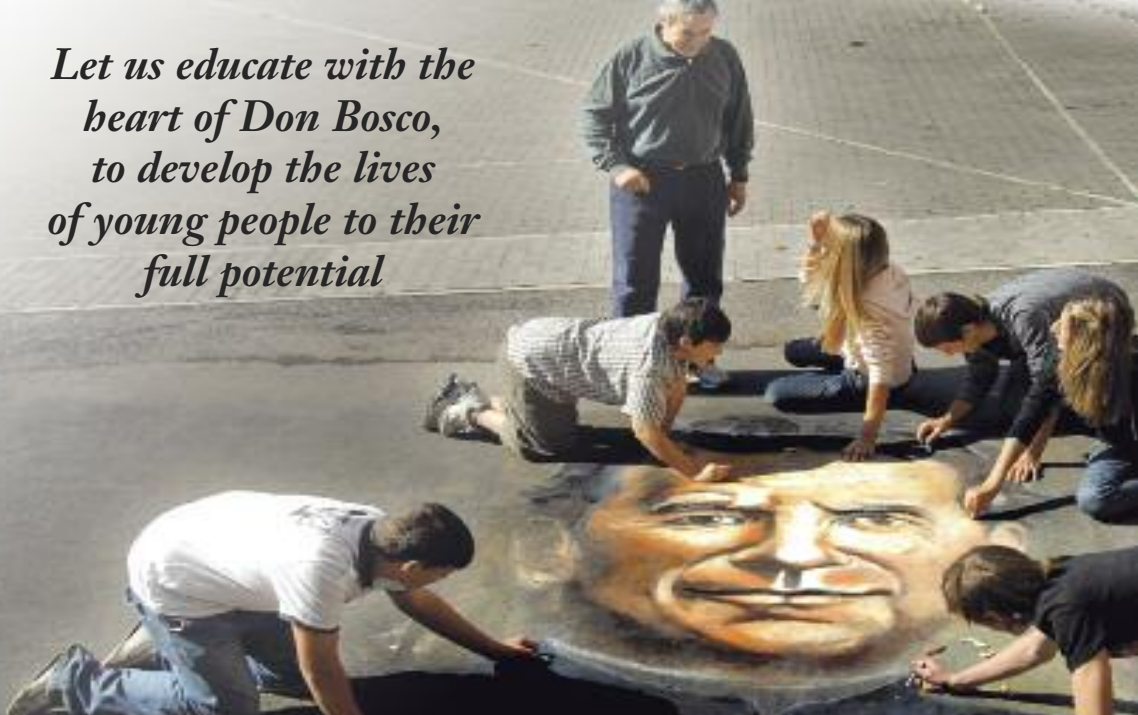
This is the fifth straight year that the province has celebrated Salesian Missionary Day close to the anniversary of the first SDB missionary expedition, Nov. 11. "From that day in 1875," Fr. Klement recalled, "at least 11,000 missionaries have departed from the basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin to proclaim the Gospel with the heart of Don Bosco."

-- ANS



Fr. Vaclav Klement with the parents of Vietnamese Salesian missionaries

*Let us educate with the
heart of Don Bosco,
to develop the lives
of young people to their
full potential*



Salesian Theme (Strenna) for 2008

Share the blessings of the Lord with His poor. When you give to the Salesians, you help poor youngsters and others in need with a Catholic education, a trade, and social programs, and you support seminarians.

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