

## **Confronto 2009**

### **Reported by ANS**

More than 300 members of the Salesian Youth Movement from 15 nations of Europe, the Middle East, and Canada met at Colle Don Bosco, Italy, during the week of August 11-16 to participate in Confronto 2009. The purpose of this great gathering was to foster understanding and an exchange of experiences among young people of various origins and to deepen their knowledge of the Salesian charism in the very places where Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello lived and worked. The first *Confronto* (literally, “comparison”) took place in 1988 during the first centennial celebration of Don Bosco’s death.

The customary Salesian joy and familiarity helped overcome difficulties resulting from language differences and gave the youths a feeling of mutual acceptance. Their faces and those of the SDBs and FMAs immediately took on hues of enthusiasm and readiness to take part in the event by listening to the voice of the Spirit. They were immersed in meetings, work groups, celebrations, and visits to Salesian landmarks. Each day was devoted to one aspect of the oratory criteria that distinguish Salesian pastoral and evangelizing activity: home, church, school, and playground.

Noted guests included Fr. Pascual Chavez, Mother Yvonne Reungoat, Fr. Fabio Attard, and Sr. Maria del Carmen Canales; the two last are the youth ministry delegates of the SDBs and FMAs.

Preaching the homily at Mass on the opening day, Fr. Stefano Martoglio, the Piedmontese Province’s superior suggested three secrets for being “Witnesses of Christ in the spirit of Don Bosco,” theme of the youthful gathering: living the Salesian

experience as God's will, breathing in the Salesianity of these places in these days, and persevering in the service they have begun--as Christ asks: "Remain in my love."

On August 13, the group visited Mornese to deepen their appreciation for the life and work of the young Mary Domenica Mazzarello. The afternoon was spent visiting the FMA Institute and places tied to Mary's life, including her house, parish church, and the Mazzarello home. Reflecting upon Mother Mazzarello's life, Sr. Canales stated, "Being members of the Church demands that we live out the role Jesus has entrusted to us: serving the kingdom of God."

On August 14, the Confronto moved on to Valdocco, the heart of Don Bosco's experience. Here the enthusiastic youths explored the third core theme and soul of the Salesian style—the playground. Visits to the Pinaridi chapel, Don Bosco's rooms, the church of St. Francis de Sales, and the basilica of Mary Help of Christians were the highlights. These Valdocco settings were full of color, song, reflection groups, and games. The young visitors could almost imagine Don Bosco speaking these words about them: "It was really a joy for me; the youngsters were ready to approach me, wanted to speak to me, were keen to hear my advice and put it into practice."

At Valdocco Fr. Attard celebrated Mass and challenged the young people with these words: "My friends: Here in Valdocco, Don Bosco met so many young people who were nobodies, treated more like servants. Don Bosco gave home, school, family, and church to these nobodies. Today Don Bosco continues to encounter these 'little ones' through us, each of you."

Fr. Attard went on to say that to act through the playground as Don Bosco did, it is necessary to strengthen our hearts through the Eucharist and devotion to Mary. Fr. Attard

ended his talk with an invitation to the young people to go out into their own playgrounds and tell everyone that being holy means being happy.

On August 16, the final day of Confronto 2009, Fr. Chavez and Mother Reungoat joined the group at Don Bosco's birthplace. They presented stories of their own vocations and answered questions regarding the future of the Salesian Youth Movement in Europe, the current value of the Salesian playground and Preventive System, and the contribution made by lay and consecrated people in the Salesian family.

Fr. Chavez told the youths that there are three secrets to the success of the Valdocco oratory: making young people feel at home, offering them what they need for life, and leading them to Christ. Mother Reungoat reminded them that today's playgrounds are wherever young people are to be found.

Fr. Attard and Sr. Canales thanked the logistics group, leaders and participants, for the "acceptance shown, the enthusiasm shared, and the witness of life and the Salesian spirit that we have all breathed." Speaking directly to the young people, they ended this inspiring and joy-filled week by inviting the participants to be disciples of Christ and apostles of his love in the style of Salesian youth spirituality, never forgetting that "the young, your friends, expect you to be credible builders of home, playground, school, and Church, all of which will make the Salesian Youth Movement more visible and convincing."