

Don Bosco

TODAY

The Salesian Bulletin
Year 125
Issue 2
Summer 2017

INTERVIEW WITH THE NEW
BRITISH PROVINCIAL p14

THE MISSIONARY
HEART OF THE
SALESIAN FAMILY p18

A DAY IN THE LIFE
OF THE CHAPLAINCY p28



If there's a story you think we should be covering, let us know!



SALESIAN LINK
Thornleigh House, Sharples Park
Bolton BL1 6PQ
Tel: 01204 600 726
Email: newsdesk@rualink.net

DON BOSCO PUBLICATIONS
Thornleigh House, Sharples Park
Bolton BL1 6PQ
Tel: 01204 308811
Email: publications@salesians.org.uk

SALESIAN SISTERS
Sister Helen Murphy FMA
Provincial Office
64 Dowhills Road
Blundellsands
Liverpool L23 8SP
Tel: 0151 924 8212
Email: helenfma24@gmail.com

SALESIAN COOPERATORS
Jessica Wilkinson
Email: cooperatorsprovincial20132016@gmail.com

DESIGN & PRINTING
Jump Design & Print
Tel: 01920 319 116
www.jumpdp.com

WEBSITES WORTH VISITING
www.salesians.org.uk
www.catholicyouthwork.com
www.sdb.org
www.donboscorelics.co.uk
www.cgfmanet.org
www.infoans.org
www.donboscoyouth.net
www.bosconet.aust.com

EDITORIAL BOARD
Fr Bob Gardner SDB—Editor
Sam Legg—Deputy Editor
Sr Pauline Clark FMA
Gerry Briody SDB
Fr Michael T Winstanley SDB
Jonny Dearden
Luke McIntosh
Alison Burrowes
Jessica Wilkinson
Kate Wilkinson
Josie Bland
Sarah Seddon



“Everything and everyone is won by the sweetness of our words and works.”

Don Bosco

Welcome to the summer edition of the Don Bosco Today.

When you receive this copy of the 'Don Bosco Today', your thoughts may well be turning to the summer months and all that they might bring. We have a magazine that is packed full of summer goodies for you, and I am delighted to be able to bring it to you.

The Rector Major sets the scene for us in his article 'Why we have Life in abundance'—it is quite a challenging piece of writing setting the Salesian scene across the world; he invites us, the reader, “never to allow ourselves to get used to seeing others who truly do not have a good life.”

We also read about a child soldier and martyr from the 1920s, when Catholicism was suppressed by the government in Mexico. Although not from a Salesian background, St José Luis Sánchez del Río is another wonderful example of Don Bosco's belief that everybody is called to be a saint, whatever their age. José was canonised by Pope Francis on October 16, 2016.

Lots of young people together can be exciting or intimidating depending on who you are with and where you are—but put 10,000 young people together in the SSE Arena at Wembley and you have an explosion of vitality, fervour, prayer and noise!! Flame 2017 was a wonderful occasion to be part of, and especially to spend it with the very first Cardinal of Myanmar, Charles Maung Bo, who is a Salesian.

We introduce you to the new British Provincial, Fr Gerry Briody SDB, who faced some probing questions about his life, his thoughts and his plans for the future—we wish him every blessing in his new ministry.

I am delighted also to introduce you to the missionary aspect of the Salesian family—as

we know, the first missionary group of ten Salesians, led by Fr John Cagliero, left for Patagonia, Argentina in 1875. Don Bosco told them that, “The world will always welcome us as long as all our concern is for the underdeveloped peoples, for young people who are poor, for those members of society most in danger.”

We have 'World Book Day' from Bolton, 'Signposts' from London and 'A Day in the Life of the Chaplaincy' from Bootle—so much is happening in our Province and we are grateful for the many blessings that God continues to shower upon us.

Speaking of blessings, a huge thank you from the Province for all the people who support our work with donations—one-off, monthly or annually. Please be assured that your donations are very much appreciated and that you are all in our thoughts and prayers.

May the peace of the Lord Jesus go with you wherever He may send you.

May He guide you through the wilderness, protect you through the storm.

May He bring you home rejoicing at the wonders He has shown you.

And may He bring you home rejoicing Once again into our doors. AMEN

Fr Bob Gardner SDB

Editor

Salesian Link

bobgardner@salesianlink.co.uk

Contents

4

4 Why We have Life in Abundance

There can be no celebration without God, without His mystery, without the strength of the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus—lest it be an ‘empty spiritualist’ celebration in which life and the suffering of the children of God seem not to matter.

6 Saint José Luis Sánchez del Río: Child Soldier and Martyr of the Cristero War

Whenever those Catholics who took up arms to defend their faith went into battle, they shouted, “*Viva Cristo Rey*”, (Long Live Christ the King).

10 Flame 2017

A Catholic youth gathering and a Salesian cardinal both trending on Twitter on the same day. Who’d have thought? Well, to those of us at the SSE Arena at Wembley on Saturday 11th March for Flame 2017, it wasn’t much of a surprise.

14 Interview with the New GBR Provincial, Gerry Briody SDB

Stay with young people. Be there for them. Even if they seem preoccupied by social media or computer games, they need you. You are the safety net and the backboard against which they can test themselves...

18 The Missionary Heart of the Salesian Family

“The world will always welcome us as long as all our concern is for the underdeveloped peoples, for young people who are poor, for those members of society most in danger. This is our real wealth which no one will envy and no one will take from us.”
Don Bosco

22 World Book Day

“I was speechless when I walked into the library on Monday morning...”

25 Signposts

There is a widespread culture which leads young people to be satisfied with modest endeavours which are far below their potential. But we all know that really in their hearts there is a restlessness and a lack of satisfaction in the face of ephemeral achievements.

28 A Day in the Life of the Chaplaincy

Every day is different. While some days a lot happens onsite, other days the chaplaincy department take a group of pupils to a completely different space.

30 Obituary—Sister Mary Mulhall FMA

Mary was very well known in the market areas in London, and it was said that some stall holders not only looked out for her but were disappointed if for some reason she did not visit their stalls that day.

31 Obituary—Sister Lisetta Ferrari FMA

“Although I have been teaching most of my life, I am pleased that I have been moved to different houses as this has enriched my experience of living with many sisters in community. I have loved the apostolate.”



The message of the Rector Major

WHY WE HAVE LIFE IN ABUNDANCE

Dear readers of the 'Don Bosco Today' and members of the Salesian family, as I write, we have just celebrated Easter.

We know very well what celebrating Easter means. In fact, we are so familiar with it that every year we need to deepen ever more our understanding of the great wealth that this reality holds.

Jesus, the Lord, the Risen One, returns to LIFE, with capital letters, the Other Life. In this way, God the Father manifests to the world that neither death nor all that causes it has the final word—not violence, not egoism, not wars and not other deaths like the exhaustion and the agony of

people who suffer in their human relationships because they are exploited, cast out, subjugated or excluded. No—these do not have the final word because God wants all human beings from the easternmost point to the farthest west, following the path the sun takes as it makes its way over the earth, to “have life and have it in abundance”.

Inevitably, my thought goes to the Salesian presences around the world because our dream is that they might be true dispensers of life to so many young people, and a life in abundance, an authentic, true life which gives





© ANS (Rome)

them dignity and helps them to also experience the great gift that God is in their lives. My thoughts fly from east to west. They start in the place in the Salesian world that is the first to see the light each day: The Samoan island of Savaii, where I got to know beautiful young people and a community that accompanies them in their daily life. Then, too, my thoughts go to the westernmost presences of the Salesian world: on the west coast of the United States.

Almost as when Don Bosco dreamt of the expansion of his congregation, it makes me happy to know that in so many places the simple houses of our Salesian world are houses which offer life to boys and girls. It is so in Samoa, the Solomon Islands or Papua New Guinea, with a wonderful preparation for the world of work that prepares them for life. It is also so in Calcutta, or in Delhi or Chennai—and many other places—with homes in which boys and girls have left behind their life on the streets and are opening up to true life for they have found a house that is a home.

So it is in the Salesian house in Istanbul or wounded Aleppo; the street kids come together and find life in hundreds of houses of our Salesian family in Africa; street children in Addis Ababa and girls rescued from sexual abuse in Sierra Leone, as well as young people in Mozambique and Angola.

Immigrant young people welcomed into the homes of the Salesian family in Catania, Naples and so many other Salesian presences in Europe are also looking for life.

In addition, the adolescents and young adults who have left behind guerrilla warfare in Colombia, now living in

“There can be no celebration without God, without His mystery, without the strength of the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus...”

Ciudad Don Bosco (Don Bosco City) in Medellin, find life. So do the thousands of displaced people on the US/ Mexican border in Tijuana, where our brothers and sisters share life with them in a very simple way.

The celebration of the Passover of the Lord inspires all of this, and much more, in me. There can be no celebration without God, without His mystery, without the strength of the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus—lest it be an ‘empty spiritualist’ celebration in which life and the suffering of the children of God seem not to matter. They matter to Jesus; day by day he intends to accompany the life of his people, especially the poor and the most fragile.

My friends, let us not be ignorant of these simple but very important things lest they escape our attention. May the

Easter celebrations fill us with joy, hope and profound faith, and may we set our sights permanently on offering life, abundant life, life that is worthy and that is authentically human to those who lives are wounded and in shambles on account of those things which are not right in our world.

I invite you, with the power of the Resurrection, never to allow yourselves to get used to seeing others who truly do not have a good life.

Ángel Fernández Artime



© ANS (Rome)

A tapestry of Mexican St José Sánchez del Río, who was martyred at the age of 14 in 1928, hangs from the façade of St Peter's Basilica before the canonisation Mass for seven new saints celebrated by Pope Francis at the Vatican last October.



© The Universe Media Group Ltd



Saint José Luis Sánchez del Río: *Child Soldier and Martyr of the Cristero War*

As the Salesian family, we are accustomed to hearing about young people whose holiness has been recognised by the Church; we think of St Dominic Savio (aged 15); Blessed Laura Vicuna (aged 13); Blessed Ceferino Namcurá (aged 19) and the Salesian Polish martyrs (aged 19-23).



© The Universe Media Group Ltd

St John Bosco believed and encouraged his boys to believe that everybody is called to be a saint, whatever their age. Indeed, on the 13th May 2017 Pope Francis canonised St Francisco Marto (aged 11) and his sister St Jacinta Marto (aged 10), two of the child visionaries at Fatima.

In his article, Peter M Smith looks on Saint José Luis Sánchez del Río, a 14-year-old Mexican boy; a martyr and for all of us an exemplary model of sanctity and courage.

During the 1920s, Mexico's Catholics were involved in a war known as the Cristero War against the government of President Plutarco Calles, a man whose hatred for Catholicism knew no bounds. Initially it was a case of church properties being seized and priests being harassed, but after 1924 the situation grew much worse. Religious orders were suppressed, seminaries and monasteries were closed, churches were burnt to the ground and priests brutally murdered. It was said that when farmers went to their fields in the morning, they frequently found the corpses of those the government troops, the Federales, had killed during the night.

Whenever those Catholics who took up arms to defend their faith, the Cristero, went into battle, they shouted,

“Viva Cristo Rey” (Long Live Christ the King). Among these was José Luis Sánchez del Río, born on the 28th March 1913 in Sahuayo, whose life was to be a short one of just 14 years. His brothers were involved in the cause to liberate their religion and when José first attempted to join them, his parents refused to allow him to do this. When his mother told him he was too young, he replied, “Mamma, it has never been easier to earn heaven as it is now.” When his parents eventually relented, the Cristero commander in his home town refused to accept him because of his young age. But this didn't deter José. He marched 20 miles to the next town to seek out the Cristero leader there. When asked how such a small boy could help the army, José told him, “I ride well, I can look after horses, clean weapons and spurs and I can cook and fry beans.” So impressed was the general that he placed José under the command of General Guizar Morfín. Before long, Morfín had made José bugler and flagbearer for the troop, a job which entailed riding alongside the General and delivering orders with his bugle.

In the early days of February 1928, General Morfín's troops faced a Federales force which outnumbered them ten to one. Nevertheless, they fought on, but it wasn't long before the Cristero had run out of ammunition and were forced to retreat. As they did so, General Morfín's horse was shot. On foot and without a horse, Morfín was in an extremely vulnerable position. When José saw this, he immediately jumped from his own horse and gave it to the General telling him, “Save yourself. If they kill me, I am not needed

but you are.” Soon after, José was captured by the government troops, along with other Cristero, including his friend, Lazarus.

Normally, captured troops were shot immediately and their bodies hung from trees or telegraph poles. But, on this occasion, the soldiers imprisoned the two boys in the sacristy of a church, hoping to frighten and intimidate the pair into abandoning their fight. As they were being led away, the boys were beaten and mocked by the troops who asked them, “What sort of men are you?”

When they later faced Federal General Callista Guerrero, they were told that fighting against their own government was a ‘crime’ punishable by death. A firing squad was assembled and the General then

“St John Bosco believed and encouraged his boys to believe that everybody is called to be a saint, whatever their age.”

gave the boys a chance of 'freedom', they would be released from their captivity if they enlisted with the government troops. José replied, "Death before that. I am your enemy, shoot me." Somewhat taken aback by the young boy's ferocity, the General then ordered them to be locked up in a prison cell in Cotija.

There, José asked for paper and ink so that he could write to his mother. He explained to her that he had been taken prisoner and that he believed he was "going to die shortly." He urged his mother not to be sad because, "I die happy because I die in the ranks of Our Lord." The following day, the boys were transferred to their native village, Sahuayo. The man who questioned them, Rafael Picazo Sánchez, was godfather to José, and he offered them several opportunities to avoid the firing squad. José could attend a military school and work towards a career on government, money was offered to him to flee abroad, all he had to do was to abandon the Cristero cause. Not surprisingly, José rejected every offer.

The two boys were then incarcerated in the local church which had been turned into a makeshift prison, stabling for horses and a place to house the governor's fighting cocks. José spent the night there wringing the necks of all the fighting cocks. When Sánchez angrily confronted José the next morning, the boy told him, "The House of God is for prayer, not to shelter animals." When Sánchez then

asked José if he knew what was going to happen to him, the boy calmly replied, "Shoot me, then I will be before Our Lord and I will ask him to chastise you." Hearing such impudence, one of Sánchez's soldiers struck José across the face, knocking out several of the boy's teeth.

Around teatime, Lazarus was hung in front of José. His body was taken down and left in a nearby cemetery. Yet

Lazarus lived up to his name—he recovered and managed to escape and re-join the Cristero, thanks to the help of a sympathetic guard. If Sánchez thought that seeing his friend Lazarus hung was going to make José reject his faith, he was totally wrong.

Next, José was taken from the church to the barracks where the death sentence was announced. Again, the boy asked for writing implements so that he could write

and thank his Aunt María for her love and support and to ask Aunt Magdalena to bring the Viaticum that same evening. Despite all their efforts, the government officers had failed to break José's resolve.

As midnight approached, guards flayed the skin from the soles of José's feet but his only reaction was to call out, "Viva Cristo Rey!" Then, his body was cut by a machete, and when they reached the cemetery, he was offered one final chance: "If you shout, 'Death to Christ The King', we will spare you." He refused and, as he stood by a newly-dug grave, the soldiers began to stab him with their bayonets as they didn't want the sound of gunfire to waken the villagers and attract their attention. But José's screams did just that, along with his cries of "Viva Cristo Rey", so much so that the captain shot him. As he fell to the ground, he traced a Cross in the dirt and died as he kissed it.

His remains were later enshrined in the Church of St James the Apostle in his home village, and at the end of the 20th century, sainthood proceedings began. His beatification took place in 2005. The recovery of Ximena Galvez, a child with numerous health problems, including brain damage, was attributed to the intercession of José after doctors had declared that the child had, "no hope of survival". After this was confirmed by a Consistory of Cardinals, José was canonised as a Saint of the Church on October 16, 2016.

Peter M Smith

The article was published in 'Novena—The Magazine of Catholic Devotions' (Issue 15). Available online: www.thecatholicuniverse.com

“As he fell to the ground, he traced a Cross in the dirt and died as he kissed it.”

Statue of St José Sánchez del Río with relic.



© The Universe Media Group Ltd



© The Universe Media Group Ltd

Wax image of the saint with relic contained in reliquary cross.

Dear Lord,

Help me to be courageous and steadfast in my devotion to you. Help me to identify causes and injustices in my day that are worth defending and standing up for. Give me perseverance and a desire to help others at any cost. Help me to revere Christ as the king of my life.

*St José Sánchez del Río, pray for us.
Amen.*

© Mazur/Catholic Bishops
of England and Wales



Flame 2017

—hashtags, holiness and hope

A Catholic youth gathering and a Salesian cardinal both trending on Twitter on the same day. Who'd have thought? Well, to those of us at the SSE Arena at Wembley on Saturday 11th March for Flame 2017, it wasn't much of a surprise.

As I stood with my phone, hoping to grab some video of the opening of the congress, there was no disputing that this was a phenomenal gathering. With its theme of '10,000 Reasons', all of us at Flame 2017 were already on our way to discovering thousands of reasons to believe, hope, pray and give thanks.

I've always loved singer Matt Redman's '10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)', the song Flame took as its theme, but hearing him perform it in the opening liturgy with around 10,000 people singing along, their phones twinkling in the darkness, was a powerful expression of hope in the faith and joy of young people in our Church.

From early morning, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram had been sizzling with photos taken on trains, buses and coaches of young people making their journeys from all over the UK. Contingents came from all the Salesian schools, and the Salesian Sisters' URSpace project also brought groups from two of the schools they work with. Young people from every diocese in England and Wales

converged on Wembley—we even heard a group had come all the way from Norway.

In the couple of hours before the opening, the concourse outside the arena filled with a colourful mass of young people with their youth leaders, chaplains and teachers, priests, brothers, sisters and bishops. Some groups had banners and flags; Nottingham youth wore their Robin Hood hats. Salesians sported the famous black and yellow Don Bosco scarves, which helped the Salesian Youth Ministry stewarding team to really rock the hi-vis jacket look. As old friends spotted each other in the crowds, there were gales of laughter, hugs and rapid catch-ups. By the time the doors opened, there was a spirit of goodwill you could feel in the air and a sense of anticipation you could almost taste.

Inside the arena, the music brought everyone together, affirming we were definitely "alive on God's great dance floor" and planting an important seed early on—you can inspire change! Despite the excitement, the enormous crowd stilled as we were welcomed by CYMFed's chair,

Fr Dermott Donnelly, whose first response from the podium was, “Wow! What a sight!”

It was wonderful to have Cardinal Nichols bringing a special message from Pope Francis, whose hope that Flame would “blaze trails that open up new horizons capable of spreading joy” was already being realised. His message called on the young to help migrants and those who feel abandoned. We all glanced towards the refugee boat moored to one side of the stage, which had carried desperate people on a risky journey across the sea to Italy, and was in the arena as a symbol of the crisis we all face.

The situation of refugees was at the heart of many of the activities: a short drama from Rise theatre gave us brief glimpses into the lives of people who have been forced from their homes by war, persecution or abuse, and reminded us that God is within all of us. During the lunchbreak, members of BOVA, the Colombians and Justice & Peace Scotland animated an activity that built on their thought-provoking reflection on the Flame app, asking people on their journeys to imagine what it would be like if they were fleeing their homes.

Even though we were respecting the ‘don’t tweet in the liturgies’ rule, the sheer volume of enthusiastic reactions being poured out onto social media meant #Flame2017 was soon trending on Twitter, as was one of the speakers—Cardinal Charles

Maung Bo, the very first Cardinal of Myanmar and a Salesian.

He talked about his own experience of the difficulties of practising his faith under an oppressive regime, and spoke of the tremendous challenges the people of Myanmar still face, as well as the valuable work being done by Catholics for social justice. He appealed to his vast young audience to turn from the trend towards hatred and anger, saying, “Everywhere that voices of

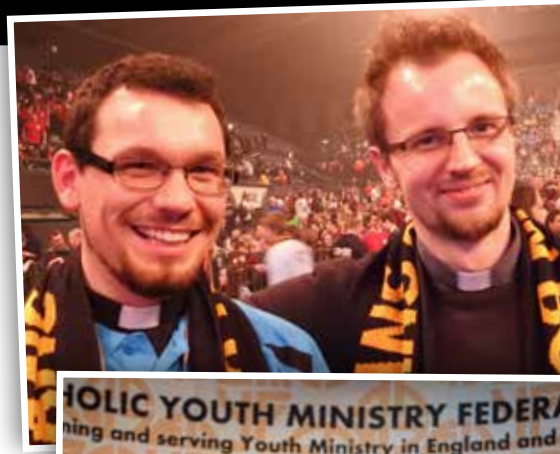
“**Everywhere that voices of hate are getting louder ... young people especially, counter hatred with love. Evil expires but hope has no expiry date.**”

hate are getting louder ... young people especially, counter hatred with love. Evil expires but hope has no expiry date.” His message of hope was powerful, telling the thousands of young people present, “You are the youth, your name is Tomorrow”, and urging them to “put

your hands in God’s hands and carry the flame of hope.”

Compelling us to take courage in standing against hatred and injustice, he quoted Don Bosco: “If one is convinced his cause is just, he will fear nothing.” Every time he mentioned Don Bosco, or being a Salesian, hundreds of us in the Salesian contingent cheered till we were hoarse.

It was a great honour to have a few words with Cardinal Bo at the end of the event, when he told me that if Don Bosco had been at the Flame Congress himself, “He would tell each one of these young people ... that the love of Jesus will inspire



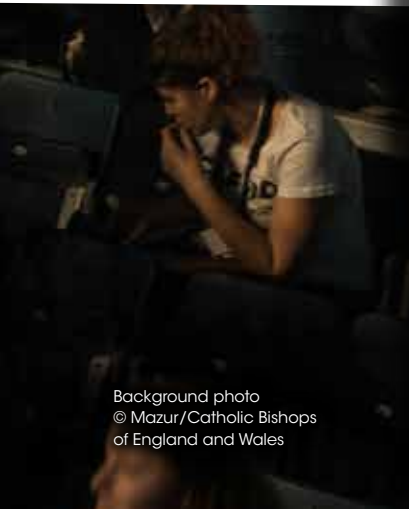
them to not lose hope because of their surroundings, or the things that are happening in different countries. He would encourage them to keep their hope for the present and for the future.”

I asked the Cardinal if he had any special message for our Salesian young people in Britain, and he asked those who are more fortunate to, “Have a wider perspective: to have regard and concern for those people who have no hope, no facilities, no opportunities.” He suggested that, “Wherever possible, they could volunteer in those countries that are underdeveloped, and offer themselves to help the people.”

There was more input from the Salesian family when Ryan, from the Savio House team, and fellow CAFOD Ambassador, Leah, described their recent visit to Lebanon where one in four people is a refugee. They saw the work of CAFOD in action, showing us a film of their visit, and passed on messages of hope from young people at home.

We heard first-hand from people who have fled to our country, when Sarah Teather, Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service in Britain and a former MP, began by showing us a video in which asylum seekers told their own stories of the harsh reality of their lives, and their perfectly reasonable desire to live their lives in safety and with dignity. Hearing from the people themselves was powerful and reinforced Ms Teather’s simple point, which so many media reports seem to forget: “They’re people, just like us.” She outlined the impact of the asylum system, including life in detention centres, telling us, “What happens to asylum seekers affects all of us.” She stressed the difference it could make if each of us just did one small thing to help—speaking out about the real challenges refugees face; helping in our local area; praying for refugees and asylum seekers.

When we took a break in the afternoon, I asked her how the young people she meets respond to the situation of refugees: “I think young people have a really strong sense of injustice. Whenever I’ve been into schools talking about



what asylum seekers go through and particularly those in detention, I think they're really shocked and they want to help. They feel quite a connection, understanding that they're destitute, and don't even have the money for a bus pass or a mobile phone top up. Most young people understand that, because to them, to be able to travel around is freedom, to be able to use your mobile phone to speak to your friends; so, I usually find that young people have quite a strong reaction."

The prayerful atmosphere for Adoration and the closing liturgy was amazing. A procession of young people carried Lampedusa crosses onto the stage, where they assembled in respectful silence as Cardinals Nichols and Bo blessed the refugee boat in the lead-up to a very moving period of Adoration.

During his session, David Wells, Director of Youth Ministry for Portsmouth Diocese, had asked everyone to chat to the people around them about what they were getting from the day. I'd noticed a very engaged group of

young people just in front of the press area, so I butted in to hear what they thought. The group were from St Saviour's Church in Lewisham, and they all felt they had gained a lot. Edbert, a young man from the group, told me: "It's been a very moving experience and I've learned a lot about how the youth are very vital members of society and that we can change our own future. I've learned a lot about the struggles of other people and how we can make a difference to their lives."

Being present with 10,000 young people like these, spending time singing, dancing, shouting, laughing and listening attentively to the presentation of serious and difficult topics was a humbling and intensely hopeful experience. We have every right to be proud of the young people in our Catholic Church: for their inspiring faith; their ability to empathise and their capacity for joy and hope.

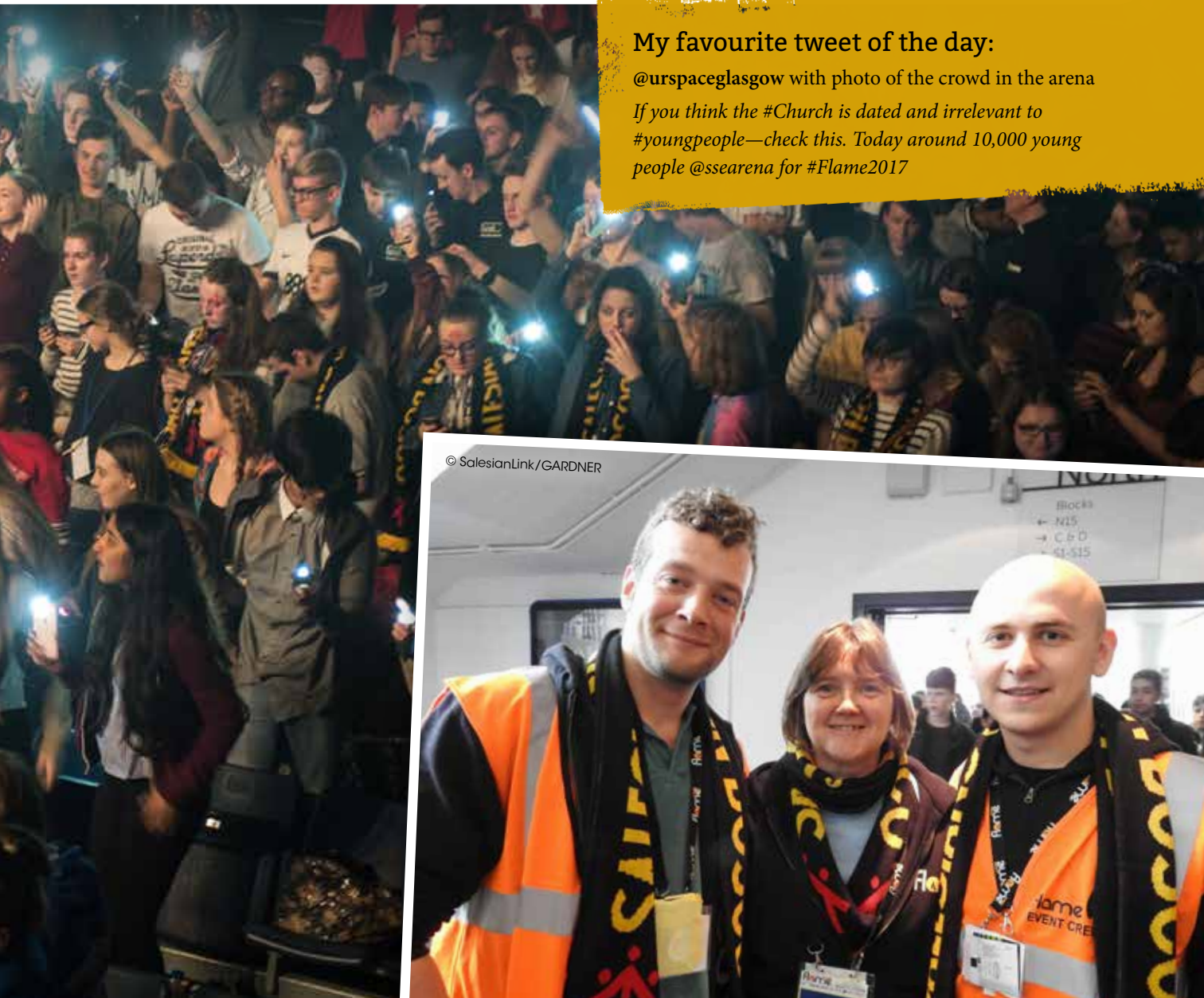
We give thanks for them and for all who guide them.

Clare Lewis
Salesianlink

My favourite tweet of the day:

@urspaceglasgow with photo of the crowd in the arena

If you think the #Church is dated and irrelevant to #youngpeople—check this. Today around 10,000 young people @ssearena for #Flame2017



© SalesianLink/GARDNER





Interview with the New GBR Provincial **FR GERRY BRIODY SDB**

Q: Can you tell us something about your background: where you grew up, your family, your interests?

A: I grew up in central Scotland, the second eldest of eight children. I am lucky enough to have three brothers and four sisters as well as fourteen nephews and nieces and one grandniece! Family was and is very important to me. I am blessed still to have my parents and enjoyed the security when I was growing up of having grandparents and uncles and aunts around me.

Q: How did you come to know about Don Bosco and the Salesians?

A: I remember one of my teachers reading a story about a saint who did lots of things, including acrobatics and magic, to help other young people. I remembered the story but not his name. When I was about ten years old, I served at the ordination of Fr Jim McGarry, which was in my home parish. I met lots of Salesians, including Hugh and Francis Preston who were only newly-ordained, but I did not really know who the Salesians were. I do remember getting what seemed like a princely payment for serving at the ordination from Fr Jim's dear mum! About two years later, a friend of my mother asked if any of her sons would like to go on a 'come and see' week at a place called Shrigley where her own sons were at school. My elder brother refused the opportunity. When I heard it involved a week off school, I gladly agreed! Sometime before I was due to depart, my mother told me the school was run by monks and asked if I was sure I wanted to go. But as I was still getting the week off school; it all seemed good to me! I went on the trip and

enjoyed playing football, snooker and swimming for a whole week with a bit of schoolwork thrown in! At the end of our time there I met the rector, Fr Michael Power, who asked if I wanted to come to the school. Thinking it was all about playing football, snooker and swimming, I immediately said yes! Getting back home, I told my parents, who said it was a serious decision to make and that I should think about it. I duly did and the vice Rector of Shrigley, Fr George Robson, came to visit my family to sort out details. I went off to Shrigley at 12 years of age with a very supportive family but also some comments ringing in my ears that, "You cannot decide anything at 12," which is true. In truth, I didn't feel that I was deciding anything; I was only making the first step. As time went on, my attitude was that I took one step at a time asking myself what I felt God wanted of me at each stage. If it was to carry on the journey that I set out on, I was happy to do that. This has been my journey so far. I would always advise people to follow their instincts in making choices and not to underestimate the spiritual depth present in young people.

Q: What went through your mind when you were invited to become the Provincial of the Salesians in the UK?

A: I was away in America when the extraordinary visitation of the Province was carried out by Fr Tadueusz Rozmus. When I returned to the UK ten days before Christmas, I felt glad it had all passed me by! Three days before Christmas, I received an unexpected phone call from Fr Rozmus explaining the Rector Major wanted to speak with me. I was more than a little surprised.

Nevertheless, I also realised once I had spoken with the Rector Major that there was a job that someone had to do. In the Italian language, they talk about your *disponibile*. It basically means availability. I was available, having come out of school ministry and taken a sabbatical. But *disponibile* also touches on your openness; that was a bigger challenge for me.

Q. What do you see as the main priorities for the Salesians of Don Bosco in the UK?

A. I am tempted to say vocations, vocations, vocations! There is a huge amount of work to be done in accompanying young people today who are facing innumerable challenges in holding onto their dignity, their identity and their personhood. We need good people who are prepared to walk alongside young people through their trials and tribulations. Above all, we need young Salesians who are prepared to go the extra mile and more and who help to incarnate the Salesian charism in a very human and in a very spiritual way. I believe it is important that we offer young people the possibility of vocational discernment in its widest and in its specific sense. We need to build relationships with them through meaningful encounter and fellowship. Our communities must be open to allowing this to happen.

Q. In what ways would you envisage the wider Salesian family in the UK sharing in this mission?

A. At the recent ordination of Kevin O'Donnell SDB, we witnessed a wonderful gathering of the Salesian family. When we are together at such a celebration, we can see the inherent strength of having such a structure to support our work. I believe the challenge is to be able to mobilise that strength in ever more effective ways through prayer and through participation in joint initiatives when that is possible.

Q. What excites you about young people in the GBR Province's Salesian schools, parishes, youth retreat centre and youth ministry projects?

A. (i) Their openness to taking up a challenge once it is presented to them.
 (ii) Their generosity in giving of themselves to situations and causes, including where considerable self-sacrifice may be expected.
 (iii) Their openness to seek out new experiences, irrespective of borders and languages, offering their gifts and talents to young people across the world.

Q. Is there anything about present day youth culture that causes you to be anxious, and how do you respond to that?

A. (i) Young people becoming so completely lost in the virtual world of social media that they find it difficult to distinguish between reality and fiction.

(ii) The wave of mental health issues facing young people at risk due to family break up and a lack of rootedness in their lives.
 (iii) The lack of safe spaces for young people to speak their mind about what life and faith means to them without being shouted down or shunned when they try to express their views.

Q. What invitation or challenge do you think Don Bosco would put before young people in our Salesian settings in the UK if he were alive and present today?

A. (i) Know your own mind.
 (ii) Choose good friends.
 (iii) Get involved in good pursuits such as reading, music, sport etc.
 (iv) Commit your life to making a difference—seize each day and make use of it.
 (v) Whatever happens place your trust in the goodness of God.

Q. Many of the readers of Don Bosco Today are parents and grandparents. What advice or encouragement would you offer them as they encounter the daily cares and concerns of their children and grandchildren?

A. Stay with your young people. Be there for them. Even if they seem preoccupied by social media or computer games, they need you. You are the safety net and the backboard against which they can test themselves in the knowledge that you will always be there for them. It is important that they know they will always be loved, always appreciated no matter what. The singer Robbie Williams, I am told, wrote the song 'Angels' about an aunt of his who always listened to him and accepted him for who he was no matter what he had done. Young people need to know you are there.

Q. Do you have a motto or a piece of wisdom or something significant in your mind, heart and spirit that keeps you grounded and enthusiastic, joyful and optimistic as a Salesian priest?

A. *Carpe Diem*—seize the day!
 This sums up for me basic Salesian optimism about the present and the future. The writer Horace's original sentence in his writings was, "Seize today because you do not know what tomorrow may bring." As Salesians, I believe we have a much more positive view of the good that is in each and every young person and of future possibilities.

Questions by Fr Kieran Anderson SDB





“

Empower yourselves with a good education, then get out there and use that education to build a country worthy of your boundless promise.

”

Michelle Obama



The Missionary Heart OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY

Throughout his youth and for a couple of years after his ordination in 1841, Don Bosco thought that he might become a missionary priest.

His spiritual director, Saint Joseph Cafasso, allowed Don Bosco to study French and Spanish, but when he started to learn English, he was told outright, "The foreign missions are most certainly not for you! Think about it. You can't get to the other side of Turin in a closed carriage without becoming travel sick and you want to cross the ocean? My dear Don Bosco, you'd die during the voyage and of that I am sure!" Gradually, again with the help of Fr Cafasso, Don Bosco came to understand that his time, talents and efforts as a young priest were to be directed to meeting the real needs of those young people who were poor,

exploited and abandoned on his doorstep rather than far away in distant lands.

With the founding of the Congregation, the thought of Salesian missionaries setting off for mission lands often came to him by day, when he could be found in his office studying the map of the world, or by night, when his mind was filled with strange dreams. Once, he found himself transported to a wide and vast plain that was inhabited by people who were clearly fierce warriors. They slaughtered a troop of armed soldiers. A group of missionaries approached them, but one by one they too were massacred. A third group appeared. There was a real atmosphere of cheerfulness and zeal about them, and before them went a group of joyful young people. Immediately, Don Bosco



© Larm Rmah/Unsplash

recognised them as his Salesians in the company of young people. The warriors laid down their weapons. They listened attentively to the missionaries, and the dream ended with everyone singing a hymn. His numerous missionary dreams both intrigued him and encouraged him. Don Bosco asked himself where this strange land might be that so regularly appeared in these dreams. His research led him to consider the possibility that it might be Ethiopia, Australia, Hong Kong or India.

In 1874, Don Bosco received a request from Argentina asking him if his Salesians would accept pastoral care of a parish and a boarding school in Buenos Aires. In the light of this invitation, further study led him to the indigenous people of Patagonia, a vast region located at the southern end of South America, shared between Argentina and Chile. Don Bosco became convinced that this was the land and these were the people of his dreams. He accepted the pastoral commitments in Buenos Aires, which were principally directed to the spiritual care and education of Italian immigrants and

their families. From these works, where the Salesian missionaries would find a warm welcome and would have friends among friends, he fervently believed that it would eventually become possible for the Salesians to venture into Patagonia, bringing with them the message of the Gospel where it might be heard, listened to and accepted for the first time.

The first missionary group was made up of ten Salesians led by the jovial, intelligent and energetic Fr John Cagliero, who had first met Don Bosco when he was twelve years old. On 11th November 1875 in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, Don Bosco blessed the members of this first missionary expedition. In his homily he said:

“We are at the beginning of a mighty enterprise, not because we have pretensions,

nor because we believe we can convert the whole world in a few days. But who knows? This departure for the missions, this humble beginning, may be the seed that will grow into a mighty tree. It may be the tiny grain of mustard that will grow to accomplish great things.”

Take special care
of the sick, the
young, of the old
and of the poor
and you will win
the blessing of
God and the
goodwill of all.



© Milada Vigerova/Unsplash

It took time to establish contact with the indigenous people of Patagonia under the direction of Fr Cagliero, who gained a well-deserved reputation as an intrepid explorer and a tireless missionary. There were two strategies to the work undertaken by these pioneer Salesian missionaries, ensuring a slow yet steady success: ‘pastoral action’ in churches and chapels, by way of preaching, catechesis and the celebration of the sacraments; and ‘social action’ that established oratories, trade and boarding schools for poor young people, orphanages, parishes, printing presses and bookshops. Cagliero and his companions took to heart Don Bosco’s recommendations: advice that was meant to guide the thoughts, words and actions of the Salesian missionaries. Don Bosco wrote: “Take special care of the sick, the young, of the old and of the poor and you will win the blessing of God and the goodwill of all.”



© Salesian Archives, Rome

In the ten missionary expeditions that followed before Don Bosco died in 1888, Salesian missionaries enjoyed an esteemed reputation among both civil and ecclesiastical authorities because of their direct involvement in seeking to improve the lives of those who were underprivileged and disadvantaged, not only in Patagonia, Argentina, but also in Uruguay, Brazil, Chile and Ecuador. Don Bosco emphasised this very point by writing:

“The world will always welcome us as long as all our concern is for the underdeveloped peoples, for young people who are poor, for those members of society most in danger. This is our real wealth which no one will envy and no one will take from us.”

In total, there have been 147 Salesian missionary expeditions sending out missionaries all over the world. The Salesians are present now in 130 countries worldwide.

In a recent message of the present Rector Major, Fr Ángel Arttime SDB, he offered this thought that is both a challenge and an encouragement to Salesian missionaries:

“I recommend with all my heart that you have your eyes wide open to see the people and to look them straight in the eye; have your hearts and your arms open to receive them; and have the courage to give your entire life to them. Just like Don Bosco, you can be close to all, but your heart must always be for those ‘who are last’ and your life must always be for them too. I invite you to open your heart to so many people who live in precarious and painful, difficult situations; to be close to those who have no voice; to help them gain the justice that they deserve; to care with fraternity and solidarity for those wounded by life; and to stay far away from that indifference which—way beyond not being helpful—humiliates.”



© ANS (Rome)

Today, the calling to respond to others as a Salesian missionary is an invitation to become a missionary of humanity, of mercy and of fraternity in a world of fragile peace and broken promises. This invitation is also extended to young women and men who are sent out alongside the Salesians as lay missionaries. Don Bosco's missionary dream has passed into the Salesian family. Indeed, from the tiny grain of mustard, great things have been accomplished and continue to be accomplished as Salesian missionaries, both religious and lay, accompany and guide young people across the world. Like Don Bosco, at the heart of all that they seek to do as educators and as friends of the young is to raise up in them a sense of God and of great confidence in God's goodness, mercy and love, which is revealed in the person of Jesus and in the message of his Gospel.

Pope Francis says that, "The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and the lives of all who encounter Jesus." It is when

“The world will always welcome us as long as all our concern is for the underdeveloped peoples, for young people who are poor, for those members of society most in danger. This is our real wealth which no one will envy and no one will take from us.”

we come to know Jesus and the power of his love in our lives that we begin the process of gradually following him along the road of life and of becoming his disciples. Indeed, the Rector Major dreams of a Salesian family with a missionary heart, of missionary disciples in the family of the Church. The memory of Don Bosco's

missionary hopes, dreams and achievements remains a source of inspiration and a precious treasure. The witness that Salesian missionaries have given, even to the point of martyrdom, by defending the human dignity of those who are poor because of the Gospel is a source of joy and thanksgiving for us as a family. What might the young, especially those who are poor, abandoned or exploited be asking of us? How might we join with those who are sent out as Salesian missionaries in revealing the missionary heart

of the Salesian family—signs and bearers of God's love and mercy, especially for the least and the last in the world of young people?

Fr Kieran Anderson SDB
Director of Missions Office, UK

World Book Day

World Book Day is a celebration of authors, illustrators, books and most importantly, reading.

This year, to mark World Book Day's 20th year, Thornleigh Salesian College went above and beyond all expectations to recreate Hogwarts from the 'Harry Potter' series right here in school. Not only was the school transformed, the students enjoyed 'Harry Potter' themed lessons right across the curriculum, and they truly had a magical week.

Mrs Sarah Preece, Thornleigh Salesian College's library coordinator, and Year 12 student Owen Bond managed the whole event and were responsible for the construction of Hogwarts. She explains how they did it:

"Back in June 2016, our dream of creating a week-long 'Harry Potter' themed event was born. At a meeting between me and one of our then Year 11 students, Owen Bond, we discussed the desire to make books, writing and literature in general more appealing to youngsters who sometimes would rather use Google than a book for research, or watch a movie instead of getting lost in the pages of a good novel. I asked myself what I had enjoyed

reading at their age and which books had stayed with me; the answer wasn't difficult—'Harry Potter'!

"The idea was to initially spark enthusiasm in our students for books and reading. We wanted to encourage learning through an interactive and fully inclusive environment, to take a step away from sitting at a desk all day and bring to life the excitement of a good book.

"In July, we took our vision to Mrs Alison Burrowes, our headteacher, and she supported all of our ideas and encouraged us to follow our vision.

"After our meeting with Mrs Burrowes, we discussed making the week a cross-curricula event, ensuring the week was a magical experience for all students in each of their subjects. We contacted each department and asked them to get involved, and they responded with enthusiasm and creativity. Lessons in geography, history, RE, MFL, food technology, ICT and PE were developed to support our theme for the week, including brewing 'potions' in science, trying to break into the 'Chamber of Secrets' in maths and creative writing in the 'Grand Hall' in English lessons.





© Thornleigh Salesian College

“Our first obstacle was funding the plan, and so we ran a number of fundraising events. Me, Owen and several literacy leaders made Christmas decorations, including hand-sewn Christmas pudding baubles, reindeer coasters and handmade Christmas cards to sell at our Christmas show. Every Wednesday lunchtime I held movie clubs where children could watch a movie and have a small popcorn for 50p. After a term of serious fundraising, we’d raised almost £1000 to go towards Book Week!

“Each Wednesday morning during registration, I met with my ‘dream team’ of students to plan all events and activities. The excitement in the room was tangible and the ideas came flooding in.

“As soon as the Christmas holidays were over, we began making props. We made over 300 wand boxes by hand for Ollivanders wand shop, painted cardboard templates before cutting them out and sticking them together. We made boxes which we filled with chocolate frogs and Bertie Botts Every Flavour Beans, which were used during the reward activity, and the reactions from the students to some of the flavours were hilarious. We used old jars to fill with potions and Owen’s father and brother used recycled wood to make our shop fronts. The effect that we managed to create has been described as breathtaking; it truly looked like the genuine article.

“To make our week even more special, I began searching for external agencies to provide a bit of spark and engage as many of the students as possible. I arranged a Shakespeare workshop for Years 7–9 which introduced the children to ‘Macbeth’; Jo Stokes from As Creatives, a provider of creative arts workshops to schools, was brilliantly engaging and commanded the room like Lady Macbeth herself. The workshop left our children entertained, interested and educated.

“Wednesday saw birds of prey from Lancashire Hawks and Owls arrive in our main school hall. Margaret and Michael who run the sanctuary were wonderful, and their birds were magnificent. The affection they had for the animals was plain to see and made the display and talk that much more enthralling. While I had booked the event with the hopes of bringing a little Hogwarts magic to the school, I did not expect such an educational and exciting day.

“Thursday saw poet Dom Conlan run workshops for Year 7. He spoke to the children about what poetry truly is: an expression of what they are feeling. He read them some of his favourite poems; my favourites were ‘Bent Back’, which told of Dom’s struggle in school with bullying, and a poem called ‘New Beginnings’ by Tony Walsh. In this poem, one line stood out for me as it represents everything that we try to do as Salesian educators, “Your history is not your future”. After writing their own short poem, the Year 7 children left feeling inspired by the stories and poems that Dom had told them. Hopefully studying poetry won’t be so scary for them now.

“To finish off our week, our very own magician, past student Lorenzo, arrived to perform some magic for the whole of Year 7. He made doves appear and then disappear and left every member of the audience, including me, wondering how he did it and whether magic really is real.



© Thornleigh Salesian College

World Book Week

Staff and students came dressed as their favourite magical creature or character, topping off an amazing week with yet more excitement and good humour.”

Mrs Sarah Preece Library Coordinator

“I was speechless when I walked into the library on Monday morning. The staff and students had spent time during the half term break transforming it into scenes from ‘Harry Potter’. Our students were so excited when they saw it and they thoroughly enjoyed all of the activities that the staff had planned for them throughout the week.

“A group of approximately 25 children had managed to keep a yearlong secret from their peers and had sacrificed breaks, lunchtimes and their own holidays to help realise their dream. Special thanks go to Mrs Preece and Owen Bond from Year 12, who masterminded the whole week. Thornleigh Salesian College is a wonderful school where great things happen every day, and it became even more magical during World Book Week.”

Mrs Alison Burrowes Headteacher



© Thornleigh Salesian College



© Thornleigh Salesian College

Those of you who know me will know that I am not often lost for words, but I was speechless when I walked into our school library on the Monday morning of World Book Week. It had been transformed into two scenes from ‘Harry Potter’, and I could not believe how amazing it looked!

Months previously, Mrs Preece and Owen Bond, one of our senior students, had approached me and shared various ideas they had regarding the theme they had chosen and the plan for the week, but I had no idea that the outcome was going to be as fabulous as it was.

Watching the staff and students throughout the week enjoy the variety of activities and opportunities organised, I reflected on how fortunate we are here at Thornleigh Salesian College to have such committed, dedicated and inspirational staff prepared to go the extra mile.

As a Salesian school, we are inspired each day by the work and teachings of St John Bosco and, for me, World Book Week was the perfect example of how we as a school are living that Salesian tradition and ethos. St John Bosco said, “It is not enough to love the young; they must know they are loved.”

The time and effort that the staff put into making this week so enjoyable, fun and educational was the perfect example of how we demonstrate to our young people how much they are loved. The balance between creating a home, a church, a school and a playground is key to ensuring that students not only learn well because they know that they belong to the Thornleigh family, but that learning is fun and celebrates everything that is good about them as young people.

Plans are already in place for next year’s World Book Week...watch this space!

Mrs Alison Burrowes Headteacher

Signposts

Fact file—young adults and life choice

Late adolescence. According to many current social sciences sources, adolescence continues into the mid-twenties with brain development and hormonal changes not fully settled before the age of twenty five. The links between actions and their consequences can be very weak, leaving young adults open to making lasting damaging choices for themselves and others.

The decline of generosity. There is evidence from Professor Francis Furedi (emeritus professor, University of Kent) that young adults are becoming less selfless and losing the drive that changes their own lives and the life of society around them. The desire to make a difference seems to have been suppressed by a secular culture.

Confusion of more change and choice. The 'choice problem' has always existed for this age group, but it is more difficult today because of the breakdown in family stability and the increase in choices about lifestyle and careers. The absence of accepted wider values leaves a young adult adrift without guidance in critical choices.

The awareness of a job as a vocation has diminished.

The current leader of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), Jackie Smith, had to write to all nurses last year to remind them, "You are never off duty. There is an expectation still that you have a certain standing in society." The vocational aspect of teaching, policing, nursing and many other roles is being weakened by consumerism.

Exams vs vocations. Schools are the natural home for the formal development of a sense of vocation. Many schools work tirelessly to satisfy the demands of targets and the deeper needs of young people, but they are only recognised for the former. Amanda Spielman, the chairman of the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation in England (Ofqual), stated in 2015 that, "There is more to life than exam grades." But schools still struggle to find the time to address the deeper sense of vocation living in young people.

Vocational complexity. This is unlikely to go away as social, economic and relational flexibility in society is set to



© Signposts

I really enjoyed the workshop and felt that it made me think of what I enjoyed in life and what I thought might be a direction for the future. I particularly found the memory activity very useful as there were clear indications of what was really important to me already hidden in my past. I now feel I have a clearer understanding of the choices that I am likely to make in the future.

Maddy

continue. According to retirement specialist LV=, up to 55% of young adults can expect to be made redundant and have up to nine different career roles in their working life. They will also have to work seven years longer than their grandparents. In addition, they are likely to be co-habiting and have a less stable pattern of relationships than in previous decades.

Stories

Elizabeth was a bright student with proud parents, who encouraged her to get into medical school. That pressure led to Elizabeth qualifying as a doctor after five years. But her desire to please her parents had masked a deeper aspiration to become an artist. As soon as she set up independently, she left medicine and feels that she wasted five precious years. She didn't blame her parents but herself for not listening to her deeper desires.

Gary was delighted to get into his second year of A levels. But when he had a bad night and was ridiculed by a teacher about his poor work, he told the teacher what to do with his essay and walked out of the class. The class waved and cheered, and Gary felt great. But he has regretted that day for years because it led to trouble at home, living in rented accommodation, unstable work patterns and debt. In some ways, Gary lost his soul in the process.



© Anthony Kelly

Michael was a bright, engaging 21-year-old who was outgoing and friendly. He moved away to university and suddenly felt lonely and confused. He dropped out after six months and ended up in a job selling insurance with an unscrupulous firm. His friends told him he had made the wrong choice, but Michael was desperate to stand on his own two feet. That story continues.

A Satnav for Life

Many young adults are now adrift and have lost their inner satnav for making good choices. Some of their choices can undermine their self-worth and diminish their happiness. The following quotation has been popularly, albeit incorrectly, attributed to John Lennon telling this story from his Liverpool childhood: “When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down ‘happy’. They said I didn’t understand the assignment, and I told them they didn’t understand life.”

The facts and stories in this article point to a growing need among young adults to look beyond career and wages to find meaning in their lives and to be happy in what they do. The complexity of choice and the short-term nature of commitments bewilders many young adults. Sometimes they act impulsively, reacting against parental advice and then regret it later. Sometimes they unconsciously do what friends and family want and lose that individual spark that is called

vocation. Sometimes they just freeze and get locked into depression that drains their confidence. Blended families and fluid relationships put their lives on a rollercoaster of survival on which it is difficult to establish a sense of personal direction or vocation. They have lost a deep sense of vocation in a shallow, secular culture.

“There is a widespread culture which leads young people to be satisfied with modest endeavours which are far below their potential. But we all know that really in their hearts there is a restlessness and a lack of satisfaction in the face of ephemeral achievements [...] This restlessness, besides, is precisely the sign of the inalienable necessity of a culture of the spirit.” (Pope John Paul II for The XXX World Day of Prayer for Vocations, September 1992).

Signposts is so relevant for us. A lot of young adults are shuffled through the education system without having the chance to think about how they are being called into life or how to gain the tools to make good choices. Signposts does that.

Brad

Signposts is a practical response to this call for a stronger culture of vocation made by John Paul II. More recently, Pope Francis challenged youth leaders to be more innovative in engaging with changed needs:

“Those who work with youth cannot be content with simply saying things that are too tidy and structured; these things go in one ear and out the other of young adults. We need a new language, a new

way of saying things. You should not feel uncomfortable in reaching out to anyone.” (The Union of Superiors General 82nd General Assembly, 29 November 2013).

Signposts reaches out to everyone regardless of their religious beliefs. Signposts offers an open and safe space to think spiritually about life choices and awaken a sense

It was nice to have a person-centred approach to looking at my future and to see how my own skills and the things I enjoy can fit into and complement the world and its needs.

Alan

of vocation in people of any religion or none. This is new ground in vocational work. It is not a way of recruiting young adults to religious vocation, but it is a way to help young adults release themselves from the forces that seek to deform their souls. Young people need to be more than consumers of life; they need to be creators too. In the words of Pope Francis, Signposts is an invitation to:

“Wake up the world! Be witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living!”

What does Signposts do?

Workshops. These last for no more than two hours and are based on five experiences behind making a good choice. That choice may be about work, relationships, career or work breaks. The workshop provides the insight to help young adults find their deeper desires and the passion that makes them a unique gift to their world. These workshops are led by trained young adults who will travel to different locations in the country. At present, we are working in southern England, in the Midlands and in Wales with pilot workshops. As the project develops, we will extend the workshops slowly across the whole country.

Residential weekends. These offer a chance to deepen and personalise the Signposts way of thinking. It is especially useful for those who are facing a significant choice in the near future because it offers a developed model for discernment. Over the weekend, participants will explore how to balance their thinking, recognise the wisdom of their experience and engage with their unique pathway more clearly. We describe this as ‘finding an inner satnav’ that constantly draws us home to our true selves from wherever we are. Unfortunately, the noise and pace of life has drowned out this inner guidance and left many young adults without a sense of direction or purpose in life. The weekend tries to help people hear that still small voice and trust it.

One-to-one guidance. This is still in the early pilot stages. We want to offer to any person who completes a weekend the possibility of individual guidance on life choices for up to six sessions in their own geographical area. Twenty five SDBs, FMAs and Salesian lay people have looked at this individual guidance role and are ready to step forward as the project develops. Others will be invited as the need grows. The aim is to create a national network of vocational guides for young adults and, in so doing, to help create that culture of vocation spoken about by Pope John Paul II.

In collaboration with the National Office for Vocations (NOV), this pattern has been established and is part of the innovative national framework for vocational development. It follows the pattern of the Gospel, going into the world of young adults, understanding their challenges, using their language and opening pathways to deeper reasons for living. If faith or religious issues arise, it will be because the participants themselves have raised those issues as part of their search for meaning. Signposts is not seeking to recruit people to any religion but to challenge people to engage with their unique spirit through the choices they make. It is new evangelisation.



The word ‘vocation’ in the Signposts project is therefore used in a very specific way. It does not imply religious life or priesthood or assume any specific religious faith. Instead, Signposts defines vocation as:

“The place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” (Frederick Buechner, ‘Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC’).

This is the vocation to which our inner satnav constantly draws us: the place where we are most ourselves and most engaged with the world around us. So, to be faithful to our vocation means saying “no” to many things so that we can say “yes” to that unique space where our gladness meets the

needs of our world. That world could be as large as the universe or as small as our own family network, and the deep gladness could come from the gifts that we have or the needs we have met in our own life story.

Don Bosco’s work is often described as saving souls, and that is what the Signposts project tries to do. So many ideals, so

much energy and spiritual wisdom is being lost in the noise of life around young adults. Their souls are at risk through choices made about relationships, careers and living situations. Their souls are smothered by instant gratification and the search for the next new thing. Their self-esteem is too closely linked with achievement, popularity, power and possessions. The more they cling to these mesmerising forces the more their integrity, their soul, is at risk.

Signposts is a project that helps young adults embrace what matters most by finding their soul, their unique link to the mystery of their lives. It stands firmly in the Salesian tradition and follows Don Bosco’s motto in a new setting: “Give me souls, take away everything else.”

www.signposts.uk.net

“Everyone should do a Signposts workshop. It’s just two hours but two hours that could change your life forever.”

Clare





© Savio Salesian College

A Day in the Life of the Chaplaincy

It's 8 o'clock in the morning and Brother Maciek Sokalkski is just opening the door to the chaplaincy room. It's been raining all night and a group of pupils, who have been waiting in the cold for a few minutes now, come into the warmth to watch an episode of 'The Simpsons' before the lessons begin. The video club is always fun. Students—especially those dropped off early by their parents—love to spend their time here. It's their space. They can have their morning toast while enjoying some fun before the lessons begin.

Soon after, the children go to meet their tutors and another day starts. A special group accompanied by a volunteer, Hazel Fort, goes to one of the classrooms to lead the morning prayers. We call the group the 'Peer Chaplains', which consists of mostly Year 9s, but also a couple of others, who help to animate the moments of prayer. Each day a different class

has this special opportunity to mark the beginning of the day in a slightly more reflective and liturgical way.

Meanwhile, the Associate Assistant Headteacher (SLE) Head of RE, Mr Bennett, and I deliver an assembly in the hall. Today it's for the senior students. A mixture of music and readings set a very reflective mood. It's only a few minutes, but at times it is those few minutes that remain in one's mind for life.

We're very lucky to have a big chaplaincy team here at Savio Salesian College. Hazel, Brother Maciek and I are free to focus primarily on chaplaincy matters, while a number of other teachers very generously support all sorts of initiatives and contribute their own ideas. Mr Bennett, for example, organises numerous school trips, camps and pilgrimages. Only last year, a large number of pupils were able to visit Disneyland, Paris, while this year, 35 students will go for a school pilgrimage to Lourdes. "It's not enough to love the children, they need to know that they are loved" —

Mr Bennett quotes Don Bosco when asked about the secret of his motivations.

I'm truly humbled witnessing the generosity of the staff. Hazel, who in the past worked in another Catholic college, offered to volunteer in our chaplaincy department three days a week. The pupils love her. A bit like Don Bosco's mother, Mamma Margaret, Hazel has a motherly care and touch and spreads optimism and Salesian joy with affection and love.

For a long time now, our college has been a training ground for the Salesian brothers preparing for priesthood and religious life, and the chaplaincy department facilitates that in a great way. The brothers come to spend some time with us, responding to the needs of the school in different ways. This special time is called 'practical training' and it is then that the vocation can be understood, not only through advice and study, but also through the lived experience. For many years, there has always been a brother or two who would spend this special time with

us, accompanying young people. This year it's Brother Maciek. He gets involved in school life by supporting the retreats, accompanying more demanding students, helping with trips, preparing the school bulletins, displays and a hundred other things. He brings a lot of cheer, making the Savio chaplaincy even more special.

A lot can be done thanks to the senior leadership team, who help to promote the Salesian spirit so well. Our Executive Head, Frances Harrison, is in fact a Salesian past pupil. Having graduated from a school run by FMAs, she knows exactly how to promote loving kindness in a way that Don Bosco would be proud of.

As the day goes on, a lot of things take place. It's Lent now, so for two of the lessons we will take different groups of pupils on the Way of the Cross. Stations have been strategically placed around the school, and at every stop pupils will be given a small reflection and a prayer.

Another lesson offered to pupils is the 'chapel session'. It's a long tradition cultivated in the school since the beginning, and the students love it. The premise is to spend half an hour exploring a chosen theme and, provided they do well, to spend the remaining time visiting the Don Bosco Club. Pupils are always very keen to make good use of this time. Lately, it has taken the form of



Mass preparations. We go through different parts of the Mass, explaining them and learning a couple of songs in between. After all the work is done, children go to the club. 'The Donny', as they affectionately call it, is a place where they enjoy table tennis, air hockey, pool and many other games. Don Bosco always wanted to include the fun factor, the 'playground' of sorts, which he believed to be very important for the integral development of any child. This school club provides just that, and it is not only during the chapel sessions that the pupils can visit it. Every lunchbreak it is open and supervised by staff members to make sure children can play games happily and safely.

In fact, lunchbreaks play a key role in many other ways because after the meal, all the extra-curricular

events take place. There are Jiu Jitsu lessons, book clubs, football training, trampolining, drama, dance, robotics and a lot more! During Thursday lunchtimes, the Bosco Group meet, which brings together a group of pupils that is animated by the chaplaincy team. The age varies but the purpose is always the same—to live out the Salesian spirit through what we are and what we do. Children animate various moments of the school life—semblies, school Masses, local parish events and so on. Every week they meet in the school chapel, actively joining the Eucharist, singing, playing music, dramatising the Gospel, reading, serving etc. Once a month they also join the evening service at the local Salesian Parish Church, an event which is followed by pizza. They are happy to support any initiatives the chaplaincy team proposes.

Every day is different. While some days a lot happens onsite, other days the chaplaincy department take a group of pupils to a completely different space, as is the case with school retreats for example. Every pupil gets a chance to participate in one of them throughout the year. This year most of those activities took place in St Joseph's House of Prayer, Formby—a beautiful centre run by the Poor Servants of Mary and Joseph. Located in the middle of the woods, not far from the coast,





© Savio Salesian College

it provides for a very peaceful space that is ideal for a day out. The students are invited to step back and think about what's truly important in life. The themes vary. From Year 7's 'Welcome Retreat', filled with reflections about Don Bosco and what it means to be a Salesian student, to Year 11's retreat on mindfulness, where students think about the future and the next steps they want to take in life. It is always very interactive. There are moments of prayer and reflection, group work, watching extracts from movies and commenting on them. Finally, there are games, fun, and, if the weather permits, outdoor picnics and football.

The retreat experience is also offered to the partner primary schools. They are invited to the college site for one-day retreats at different times during the year. On those days, the chaplaincy

team provides a programme tailored particularly for the junior participants that includes ice-breakers, animated movies, moments of prayer, games and reflection—all of which contribute to forming a unique experience that they will remember for life. The Savio Salesian College pupils also play an important role in those. Trained by the chaplaincy team, they accompany their young friends during those special days.

To me, being a Salesian chaplain immersed in all those events is a privilege and a blessing. As a past pupil of a Salesian school, it makes me very happy to be able to contribute to the environment of this college. It is more than a school, and it makes me truly happy to pass on to the youth what I have received from God through the Salesian congregation. The Salesian mission is certainly demanding, but it is also very satisfying and joyful.

And, as the Lord says: "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few." Let us pray to the Lord that He might send us many more brave women and men who will respond to His calling and enter the path of the Salesian religious life.

**Fr Jakub Ruszniak SDB
School Chaplain**

SISTER MARY MULHALL FMA

Born in Abbeyleix Portlaoise (Ireland) 31 October 1923

Professed in Cowley (Oxford) 5 August 1948



© Unknown

Mary was the eldest of five children. Her parents were good Irish Catholics. Mr Mulhall was a farmer and, like Mary Mazzarello, Mary learned much from him, which she used on many occasions during her life.

Sadly, when Mary was about 14 years of age, her mother died and she took on the responsibility of looking after her father and the family until she entered the congregation.

Her desire was to enter with the Salesian Sisters and so she became an Aspirant in Limerick, Ireland in 1946. She was professed in Cowley, England in 1948. Until 1977, Mary then worked in our houses in Cowley, Chertsey, Paisley and Liverpool as bursar and cook until in 1974 she moved to our house in Streatham, London.

Being aware of the need for finances in the Province, Mary rose very early in the morning and went to various markets in London to beg for provisions. These were distributed to the houses in the Province. Only God knows how much was saved over the years by this daily work which continued, with only a five-year intermission, until 2010, or how much 'providence' was received by the Houses during these 50 years and at what cost to Mary.

Mary was very well known in the market areas in London, and it was said that some stall holders not only looked out for her but were disappointed if for some reason she did not visit their stalls that day. Many times the providence they gave was accompanied by requests for prayers for their intentions. This also became part of Mary's apostolate and in the evenings, she could often be found



© Savio Salesian College

in chapel praying for the intentions of these benefactors. During the many years of visiting the markets, she also met royalty in the persons of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother and the heir to the throne, Prince Charles.

However, her work was not restricted to the daily toil of journeying, loading, sorting and distributing. Seeing a need for the young people of the area in London where she lived, Mary became involved in the existing youth club which was a hub of activity in the house.

Mary was a mistress of 'the word in the ear'. Young and not-so-young sought her advice and prayer. She organised events, outings, anything which would bring enjoyment to the young people. As the years went on, the past pupils of the club increased and it was not unusual for Mary to be invited to their special celebrations. They would come to collect her and make sure she was returned safely to the convent—they valued her presence so strongly. One of Mary's strongest devotions was to Sr Eusebia Palomino. When in 2006 her brother, William, was diagnosed with a massive haemorrhage, a relic of Sr Eusebia was sent to the family, and the sisters and family united to beg her intercession. Miraculously, William survived, much to the disbelief of doctors and nurses. A detailed account of what appeared to be a 'miracle' was sent to the Generalate. William is still driving his tractor today!

When Mary was 80 years of age, the following were some of the tributes paid to her: "Thank you for all the chats and advice throughout the years"; "You are an inspiration to us all and have made such an impact on everyone who knows you". In 2010, it was time for Mary to say goodbye to the van, the markets and the young people in Streattham. A tribute was made in the 'Market News' magazine which read: "Sr Mary was admired and loved by so many and she will be greatly missed". Mary then became a member of our community in Cowley where she continued to spend time in prayer and doing whatever she could to contribute to the life of the sisters.

Sadly, in September, she was diagnosed with cancer. Since then, Mary was cared for lovingly by the sisters in the house, the carers and visiting doctors and nurses. Early on the morning of November 15, Sr Mary returned to the greatest market of all when the Lord called her to Himself, where she will be receiving the just reward for her life of work, sacrifice and prayer. Greatly missed by many.

Sr Connie Cameron FMA

SISTER LISETTA FERRARI FMA

Born in London (England)
24th January 1926

Professed in Cowley
(Oxford) 5th August 1946



Lisetta was born into a family of Italian origin living in London. She was one of three daughters. The family lived in an area of London which happened to be near one of the first foundations of the Salesian Sisters in Great Britain.

Therefore, from the age of 7, Lisetta was well known to the sisters and attended the John Bosco Convent in Goodge Street for sewing lessons and to be a member of the Oratory. Lisetta also went to the John Bosco Convent in Greek Street to have Italian and embroidery lessons.

It was from her contacts with the sisters there that Lisetta felt the call to Salesian Religious Life. Although the family greatly respected the sisters, the sacrifice of giving their daughter to the congregation caused them much suffering. Lisetta applied to enter in 1943 and was accepted into the Aspirantate in Chertsey in October of that year.

When Lisetta achieved her teacher's certificate in 1950, she began a long service with the Province and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, teaching many children and young people and also working in youth clubs and the Oratory. From 1950 to 1985, Lisetta taught in various schools in Farnborough, Cowley, Chertsey, Hastings, Liverpool and London. One of her references states: "Sr Lisetta is dignified, pleasant and sympathetic in manner and speech"; another states: "Sr Lisetta is a hard-working teacher.

Her diligence and care with the children is constant and kind". She is remembered fondly by those past pupils who credit her with their good education. Among these are two pupils who attended Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, Cowley, and later became Salesian priests. In 1970, Lisetta became community leader and continued in this role frequently from then until 1994.

To enable her to keep up in the field of education, Lisetta followed many courses right up to 2002 when she attended sessions on word processing!

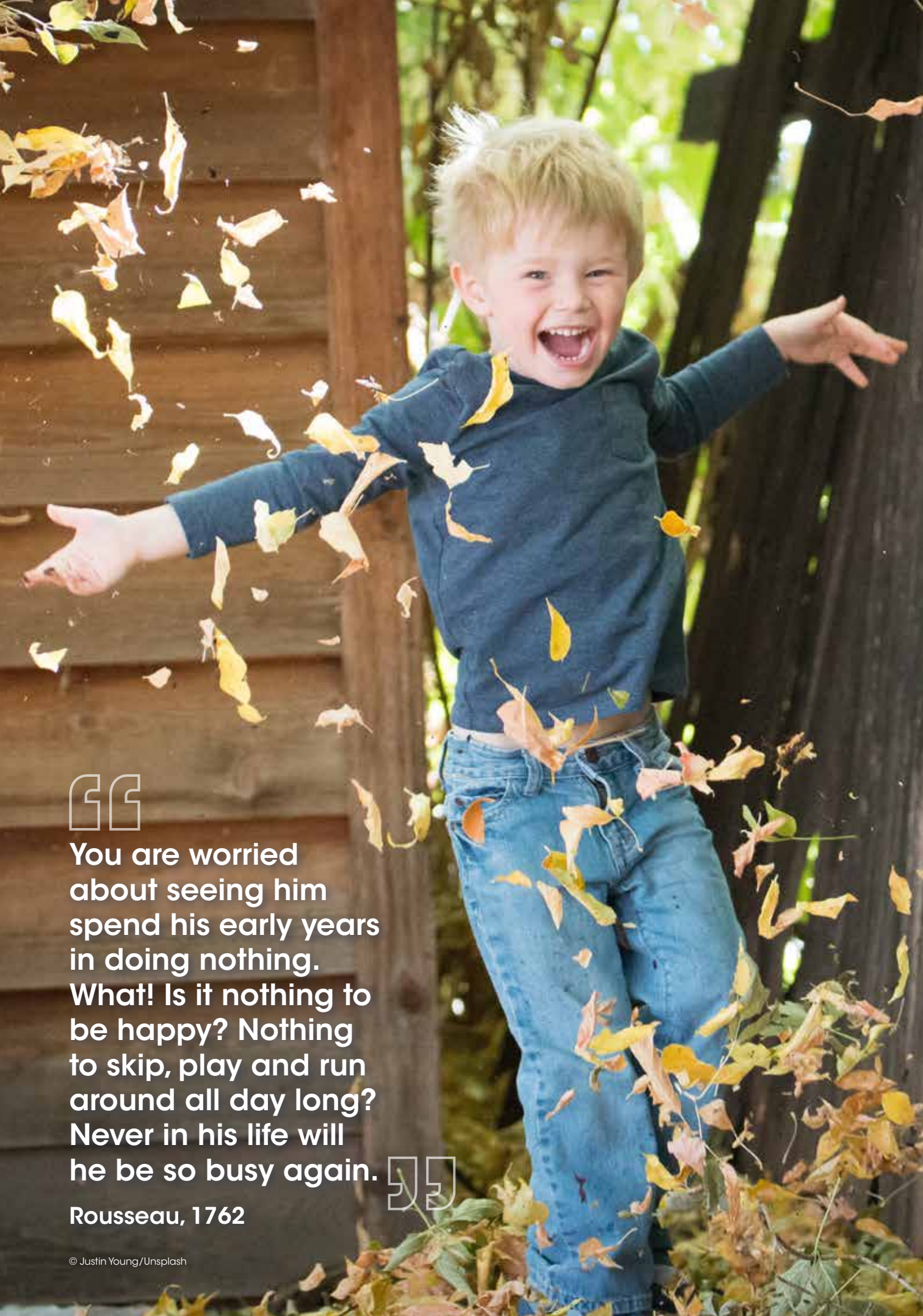
As a leader, Lisetta was firm but kind. Her words meant 'Yes' when she said that and 'No' when she said that! She was known for her uprightness, loyalty to duty, strong sense of responsibility and fidelity in prayer. With Lisetta, there was no grey area—just black and white!

Lisetta wrote: "Although I have been teaching most of my life, I am pleased that I have been moved to different houses as this has enriched my experience of living with many sisters in community. I have loved the apostolate."

In 2009, because of Alzheimer's disease, Lisetta moved to St Vincent's Nursing Home near London. There, she was surrounded with opportunities for daily Mass and prayer and she settled quickly and peacefully into the rhythm of life where she was cared for with great skill and kindness. Having been in positions of responsibility for most of her life, in these latter years, she also felt it her duty to ensure other residents said their prayers!! The matron exclaimed on one occasion: "Everyone loves Lisetta!"

Sadly, in early November the effects of Alzheimer's disease began to take its toll. Sr Connie, Provincial, remained with Lisetta for the last days of her life accompanied by Vilma, Lisetta's sister. On the morning of 14th November, in St Vincent's Nursing Home in London, the Lord called Sr Lisetta to Himself. May Lisetta be enjoying eternal light in the company of her beloved family and those sisters who knew and loved her in life. May she also pray for good vocations for our Province.

Sr Connie Cameron FMA



“

You are worried about seeing him spend his early years in doing nothing. What! Is it nothing to be happy? Nothing to skip, play and run around all day long? Never in his life will he be so busy again.

”

Rousseau, 1762