



Don Bosco ECHO



The Salesian Bulletin Southern Africa

Issue 24, 2024



Pilgrims of Hope

Greetings readers of the Salesian Bulletin and welcome to the last edition of 2024. We have entered the season of hope, Advent. The first candle we light on the first Sunday of Advent is called the candle of hope as the prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah. Pope Francis picked the theme of hope for the celebration of the Jubilee Year in 2025, Pilgrims of Hope. Our world needs pilgrims of hope as we journey towards Christmas and towards the jubilee year.

In his message to the Salesian Family, the vicar Fr Stefano Martoglio also touches on the virtue of hope through the heart of Don Bosco. I hope that the various articles in this edition will inspire you with renewed hope in humanity and most of all in the author of hope itself our Lord Jesus Christ. We echo the words of the psalmist "My hope comes from Him; truly He is my rock and my salvation". The testimonies of the contributors in this edition of Don Bosco Echo gives us hope of the wonderful work our Lord is doing through the hearts and minds of humanity. One of my favourite movies, The Shawshank Redemption [released in 1994] has a beautiful line in which one of the key characters says the following: "Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies"

May the season of Advent be a time of renewal and for spending time with loved ones, as we encourage each other with this beautiful virtue of hope. May we look forward with hope to a blessed and fruitful 2025 as we continue our pilgrimage on earth as Pilgrims of Hope.

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www.donboscoeducationalprojects.co.za
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Cover Photo

Young people on a hike at Don Bosco Youth Centre

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"If there's a story you think we should be covering, let us know!" clarencdwatts@yahoo.com

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THE MESSAGE OF THE VICAR

Don Stefano Martoglio, SDB

A BIG HEART LIKE THE SHORES OF THE SEA

A new time is given to us: from the Heart of God to the heart of humanity, mirrored in the great heart of Don Bosco



Dear friends and readers, in this December issue I address you with my best wishes for a new year! We find ourselves in a new time that is given to us to live with intensity and with “newness of life,” which I make my own, as a propitious and opportune wish. I am speaking of the gift that the Holy Father has given us in recent days: his Encyclical letter *Dilexit Nos* on the human and Divine Love of the Heart of Jesus Christ.

We Salesians are used to singing: “God has given you a heart as big / as the sands of the sea. / God has given you His Spirit: / He has set your love free.”

Pope Pius XI, who knew him well, said that Don Bosco had a “beautiful peculiarity”: he was “a great lover of souls” and saw them “in the Thoughts, in the Heart, in the Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” Indeed, in the coat-of-arms of our Congregation there is a burning heart.

Pope Francis himself introduces paragraph no. 2 of *Dilexit Nos* in this way: “The symbol of the heart has often been used to express the love of Jesus Christ. Some have questioned whether this symbol is still meaningful today. Yet living as we do in an age of superficiality, rushing frenetically from one thing to another without really knowing why, and ending up as insatiable consumers and slaves to the mechanisms of a market unconcerned about the deeper meaning of our lives, all of us need to rediscover the importance of the heart.”

How strong is this teaching of our Pope to show us a new way of living, in a new time that is given to us, the year to come.

In no. 21, Pope Francis writes: “This profound core, present in every man and woman, is not that of the soul, but of the entire person in his or her unique psychosomatic identity. Everything finds its unity in the heart, which can be the dwelling-place of love in all its spiritual, psychic and even physical

dimensions. In a word, if love reigns in our heart, we become, in a complete and luminous way, the persons we are meant to be, for every human being is created above all else for love. In the deepest fiber of our being, we were made to love and to be loved.”

And he adds in number 27 of the same Encyclical Letter: “Before the heart of Jesus, living and present, our mind, enlightened by the Spirit, grows in the understanding of his words and our will is moved to put them into practice. This could easily remain on the level of a kind of self-reliant moralism. Hearing and tasting the Lord, and paying him due honor, however, is a matter of the heart. Only the heart is capable of setting our other powers and passions, and our entire person, in a stance of reverence and loving obedience before the Lord.”

I will not dwell on this any longer, hoping to have piqued your interest to read this splendid Encyclical Letter which is not only a great gift to live in a new way the time that is given to us, which would already be enough, but it also gives us a profoundly “Salesian” quality: Don Bosco wrote and did much to spread devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as the Divine Love that accompanies our human reality.

A magnificent incentive

In the Biographical Memoirs in volume VIII, p. 119, we find the following written: “A most ardent devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus animated all his activities and rendered his familiar talks fruitful and his sermons and priestly ministry persuasive. Seemingly, the Sacred Heart helped him also by special charisms as he went about his arduous mission.”

The testimony of Don Bosco’s devotion to the Sacred Heart is “concretely” identified with the Basilica of the same name built by Don Bosco in Rome at the request of the Pope of the time. The material building refers and recalls all of us to Don Bosco’s “monumental” devotion to the Sacred Heart. As for Our Lady so also for the Sacred Heart, Don Bosco’s devotion is manifested in the churches he built because devotion to the Sacred Heart is ultimately devotion to the Eucharist and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Don Bosco’s heart, constantly in love with the Eucharist, is a magnificent personal drive to make this alive and true for us in the New Year. This is a true and deep wish for a happy new year lived to the fullest. As the song continues: “You formed men / with healthy and strong hearts: / you sent them out into the world to proclaim / the Gospel of joy.”

I would like to conclude this brief message by wishing everyone a happy new year from the bottom of my heart, with the image that Pope Francis reports in the first pages of the encyclical, referring to the teachings of his grandmother on the meaning of the name of carnival sweets, the “busie”* ... because during cooking the dough swells and remains empty... therefore it has an exteriority to which corresponds an emptiness inside; they seem big from the outside but they are not, they are “busie.”

May the New Year be full and rich in substance for all of us, concretized in welcoming Our God who comes among us. May His coming bring Peace and Truth – that what is seen from the outside corresponds to what is inside!

Best wishes to all of you!

Don Martoglio



Salesian Cooperators Provincial Congress



From 3-6 October 2024, 50 Salesian Cooperators and aspirants, from all three Southern African countries of AFM province (eSwatini, Lesotho and South Africa), met in Manzini, eSwatini for the first time. One of the largest groups of the Salesian Family are preparing with renewed drive for formation for their 150th anniversary in 2026.

This Salesian Family group, founded by St John Bosco in 1876, was launched in Cape Town in the early 20th century, but only in 2018 was it formally established as an official 'AFM Province' (Coordinator Mr Chester Browne), comprising 5 local centres (two in Lesotho: Maseru and Maputsoe, three in South Africa: Cape Town, Gauteng and Limpopo) with another three local centres in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Manzini).

Fifty Salesian Cooperators were accompanied by their provincial delegates, Fr Alberto Villalba

SDB and Sr Giovanna Pesenti, FMA in the presence of the AFM Salesian Superior Fr Vaclav Klement, SDB and Br Clarence Watts (Salesian Family delegate). The presence of the first 6 Swazi candidates to the Salesian Cooperators vocation and 3 young Austrian volunteers from Lesotho also gave a special taste to this historic congress.

The four days of this annual event were marked by daily Mass, animated by all regions of AFM province, life and mission experience sharing, spiritual and apostolic input:

I am Charmaine Bagley from Ennerdale Gauteng. By God's grace I'll be celebrating my 39th wedding anniversary in December 2024 I have been blessed with 2 Kids. I started my journey in 2014 as a Salesian Cooperator with the help of the Salesian Sisters FMA (Sr Giovanna P). I attended the monthly meetings and realized that this is where I want to be in order to start

my own spiritual journey and also working with the youth and the most vulnerable kids. I am the administrator at Laura Vicuna primary school being at Laura Vicuna School, gives me an opportunity to work with the Salesian Sisters (FMA), staff and learners daily. We recently had our yearly Salesian Cooperators Congress in Eswatini. We got so much spiritual food how to live our Vocation as Salesian Cooperators. Formation is one of the most important guidelines to LIVE, REFLECT (Share), DISCERN and PRAY hence becoming Educators like Don Bosco.

I am Cecilia Whitaker from Cape Town and for me attending the Congress in Eswatini was truly an amazing experience especially the interaction with different cultures. Over the four days, we started with an early Mass which spiritually gave us a sense of peace to open our hearts and minds. The program was well structured with quality information from Sister Giovanna, Father Vaclav, Father Alberto,

Brother Clance, and Chester Browne (Provincial Coordinator)

A reflection was done on Don Bosco's Dream to give more insight into our Salesian Spirituality. The deep sense of understanding as to how God can sometimes reach out to us through our dreams. It was inspiring listening to Salesian Cooperators from different Centres sharing on a personal and spiritual level. We can all learn from each other especially our struggling youth within our communities. They are lost in a world that creates lots of confusion plus destruction and we must give them hope and direction.

We need to step up and go into the digital world and evangelize our youth. The encounter with Manzini Bishop Jose Luis De Ponce about being more visible in church, made us realize that we need to be proactive in promoting ourselves in the Parishes. We need to be more vigilant which means more activities. As the Cape Town Local Centre, we still have lots of growing to do, with the resources and information given by Father Vaclav, we will be able to offer Formation programs and hopefully gain more Aspirants. Our mission is to grow in unity and commitment and try to follow the Don Bosco Dream.

As part of this mission to live our Salesian Spirit, we strive to be involved in community change, especially concerning our youth. Based on research that we have done our youth faces an enormous number of social challenges and we have now implemented an Awareness Program. We have awareness talks within our Parishes about these challenges and if successful we will take it one step further and host workshops that will include solutions to the challenges. We are excited that we were allowed to host the Congress 2025 here in Cape Town the birthplace of the Salesian Family Group in Southern Africa. In conclusion, the Congress was fruitful, we gained resources and information. The sharing and spiritual input from everyone came from the voice of the Holy Spirit, that we all have answered the calling to be part of the Salesian Family.





God's plans are bigger than all of us

As Christmas draws near, and the year moves closer to the end, the approaching holidays compel us to reflect on our lives; to take stock of our achievements, and the failures that optimists like me call 'lessons.' As an individual, a family, community, church, a country and humanity at large.

**What good did you do this year?
What can you do better?
And What didn't work out?**

Earlier this year, I finished the 116KM Moshoeshoe Walk in Lesotho. This was both challenging and fulfilling. I embarked on this journey to thank God for the beautiful journey of motherhood from the conception of my child to his healthy birth, and surviving the new motherhood stage. This felt like a great

way to celebrate because I spent time with God in nature. Through hiking and camping, I enjoyed God's marvellous creation: trees, rivers, mountains, the sun, stars and his brave people. I loved it. God willing, I am doing it again next year.

Take stock then and give gratitude to God. Thank your hard-working body, and your forever fighting spirit for surviving this year. A lot of people say it was a hard year. I think so too.

For some, December is a nostalgic time. Loss, grief, and many more situations beyond our control turn holidays into gloomy days. For those in war-stricken countries, they might remember the old good times when family would come together, enjoy the festive season. As we celebrate Christmas this year, let us remember the young people in Gaza, Ukraine, Congo, Sudan, Lebanon and other places where there is no peace.

The prophecy of Jesus's birth in Micah 5:1-5 also came through when war was brewing. God's plans unfolded amidst chaos and uncertainty. Even during his birth, there was running from one place to another for the safety of our Saviour as per the prophecy. So, let the birth of our saviour be a reminder of God's love for his people. He said in Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future."

For that, we hold on to the rays of hope and continue to live in grace.

Don Bosco's Dream

In reference to Don Bosco, my favourite saint, not only because his spirituality saved my life but also because his life depicts a clear picture that God speaks to us through different forms. I would like us to think about our dreams for tomorrow.

At nine years of age, Don Bosco had a prophetic dream: he seemed to be amid a multitude of children intent on playing, some of whom,

however, were swearing. Immediately, young John jumped among them, using both words and fists to silence them. I will give a teacher. Under her guidance, you can become wise.

Let's take a moment and think about the time when you think God spoke to you, in a dream, through a thought, a person you trust, a mentor, in prayer or any form. What was your response? Are you in line with God's calling for your life? Do you ever take a moment to think about what God has called you to be on this earth?

I will start. I am convinced God called me to write impactful stories and inspire through words. I am pretty sure I have not obeyed him fully because I work as an accountant, which is very stressful and takes so much of my time. When I get a chance, I write. Imagine if Don Bosco treated his calling as a side hustle or a hobby. Where would we be? You and me? I am the product of the Salesian Schools, his oratory, and his spirituality fully. Would there be Lovematters at Bosco Centre in Walkerville? Laura Vicuna school in Ennerdale, in Lesotho, or some random place somewhere in the world?

Think about the lives Don Bosco's yes has saved since 1841 to date. I encourage you to seek God, and his will for your life this festive season. Seek him through prayer, meditation, fasting, cooking mouth-watering food for your family, loving your neighbour. This is the biggest rule to obey. Love God, love your family, love your neighbour, love your friend. Love. It is not negotiable. Then God will bless you with the spirit of wisdom and discernment.

I have a Christmas Story for us. Do you know the story of Moses' birth and life as a child? His mother's and sister's role to save Moses? Let me tell you about it:

So, the Israelites were living in Egypt, where they were oppressed and enslaved. Pharaoh, fearing their growing population, ordered the midwives to kill all newborn Hebrew males. Moses' mother, Jochebed, welcomed a beautiful baby boy into the world. Jochebed hid Moses from being killed. When she could no longer hide him, she made a papyrus basket, applied

pitch to waterproof it, and placed Moses inside, and let him flow down the Nile River. Jochebed's daughter, Miriam, watched from a distance as her mother placed Moses in the basket.

Pharaoh's daughter, Bithiah, had come to bathe in the Nile. She spotted the basket and sent her maid to retrieve it. When she opened the basket, she saw the crying baby and had compassion. She kept Moses and had him raised as an Egyptian prince, while his Hebrew mother, Jochebed, nursed him.

How? Miriam, Moses' older sister, after realising what her mother did, followed the basket Moses was in without being seen. She saw Pharaoh's daughter take the basket. She later went to the palace to convince Pharaoh's daughter that she will help her find a helper for her newborn. She went to her mother to inform her that Pharaoh's daughter was looking for someone to assist her with her newborn son.

Firstly, can we applaud Moses's mother for her trust in God, and her optimism? Letting your child go down the river, that is bravery from planet I don't know. To men and women who ever had to let go their children for a bigger purpose, safety and other reasons, you are not alone. It happened to great people in history. To children who were separated from parents for any reasons, please forgive, because history shows that great people have also experienced this.

God's plans are bigger than all of us, whether we like it or not.

In John 13: 35, Gods says, "by this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Let's love one another. Donate to organisations that help people. Go volunteer your time, skills or resources to people in need. Love your parents and pray for them. Love your children and pray for them.

Most of all, enjoy your holidays. Merry Christmas Children of my Father!

Paballo Sekoto



AI: Should we be worried?



AI is fairly not a new thing in the history of humanity. We have been living with it for ages now, maybe we haven't been too excited about it. For example, calculators, mobile phones. The tricky part is that now we find ourselves with machines that can learn for themselves and somehow telling what to do and how to do. As human being we cannot but wonder where is this taking us to?

Shopping, education, national security, healthcare, technology and many other things that are part and parcel of our everyday lives, are run by AI. What is AI? Artificial intelligence is the study of machines and software that can reason, learn, gather knowledge, communicate, manipulate and perceive objects. Therefore, we can say AI takes the same characteristics of man and amplify them to be more accurate and faster. Lately there has been a rise of chatbots that people are able to interact with e.g. the famous Chat-GPT which many people use for academic type of work and as well as Meta AI found on WhatsApp etc.

However, on a general note that is what we call Generative AI. It can be classified into three, namely; Machine Learning, Deep Learning and Neural Networks. Machine Learning refers to the computers that learn from Data and improve without being programmed, but can be limited to a certain type of data. Deep learning on the other hand analyzes complex data e.g. our phone (facial recognition, fingerprints and voice commands) and lastly, Neural networks is that which makes computers to analyze data more or less like human beings e.g. face detections and Facebook tagging.

The biggest question is how we are to interact with it?

Well, depending on what a person does with it, we definitely have to take caution in what

we do. Some activities are already protected by certain institutes e.g. banking, but still we need to do our part to ensure safety. The biggest challenge is the type of machines that we use, that we unconsciously feed with knowledge and they tend to learn what we feed them.

Young people, especially students have inherited a very bad habit of using AI for assignments and thus became too reliant on it. AI can make your easy but can be very misleading at times as it provides algorithmic information. This is basically the information that it gathers and retains depending on who programs it. If for example one uses an anti-religious related app, and asks religious questions, the person will definitely be misled. AI is a tool and so must be used as such. It should not replace human relations and interaction or worse things that people can still do for themselves.

We should also remember that technology does not answer everything. Especially the fundamental questions about life that haunt humanity. There is a constant damage done to our social fabric. AI is a magnificent tool without a doubt, but it must be kept only to the things it must attend to.

When it comes to ethical principles of AI, one cannot give a general diagnosis since it's a complex entity. Nevertheless, human dignity should be prioritized and respected by all means. This includes protection of privacy, job security, misinformation and biases, transparency and accountability etc. It is the duty and responsibility of each one to uphold the irreducibility, irreplaceability and inviolability of every individual.

By Nhlanhla Nxumalo SDB





Empowering Cape Town's Youth Without Hope: Salesian Institute Youth Projects Opens Doors to the Maritime Industry

Amidst the economic challenges faced by South Africa's youth, the Salesian Institute Youth Projects (SIYP) is offering a beacon of hope through the Waves of Change Maritime Programme. Set against the backdrop of a critical national need for meaningful employment and skills training, this initiative specifically targets young men and women, aged 18 to 35, who come from disadvantaged backgrounds in and around Cape Town. With limited educational and career opportunities, many of these young

individuals struggle to support their families and build promising futures.

Youth unemployment in Cape Town remains one of the city's most pressing challenges. Every day, countless young people face the temptation of gangs and drugs, with many risking homelessness. For too many, this path becomes inevitable, stunting their potential and perpetuating cycles of violence and dependency. "SIYP offers a crucial alternative," says Abraham

Lottering, Waves of Change Programme Manager. "Through structured, transformative programmes, we guide youth toward sustainable employment and skills development."

SIYP, situated close to the bustling Cape Town harbour, has strategically partnered with leading sea fishing companies and accredited maritime training institutions approved by the South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA). Together, they provide rigorous training that empowers participants to embark on rewarding careers at sea, whether on local fishing vessels or, where applicable, through cruise lines, unlocking opportunities to travel and see the world—an unimaginable prospect for many of these youth.

The journey begins with a 3-day Orientation session, followed by a 10-day Lifeskills Programme. These initial stages are crucial for instilling essential life skills and preparing participants for the challenges and responsibilities of maritime work. The programme then guides them through the formal maritime training required to enter the industry, covering everything from safety protocols to technical skills. By the end, participants gain crucial SAMSA Medical Certificates, seafarer's logbooks, and certificates of discharge—key qualifications that open doors to seafaring careers.

"The Waves of Change Maritime Programme isn't just about providing training; it's about creating a pathway to stability and self-sufficiency for youth who may otherwise have no access to such opportunities," says Fr Francois Dufour, CEO, Salesian Institute Youth Projects. "We're not only giving them skills; we're instilling hope and enabling them to change their lives and positively impact their communities."

While SIYP endeavors to cover the costs associated with training and documentation, limited funding often means participants need to shoulder a portion of the expense. To help ease this burden, SIYP negotiates reduced rates with its training partners, making the programme more accessible to all.

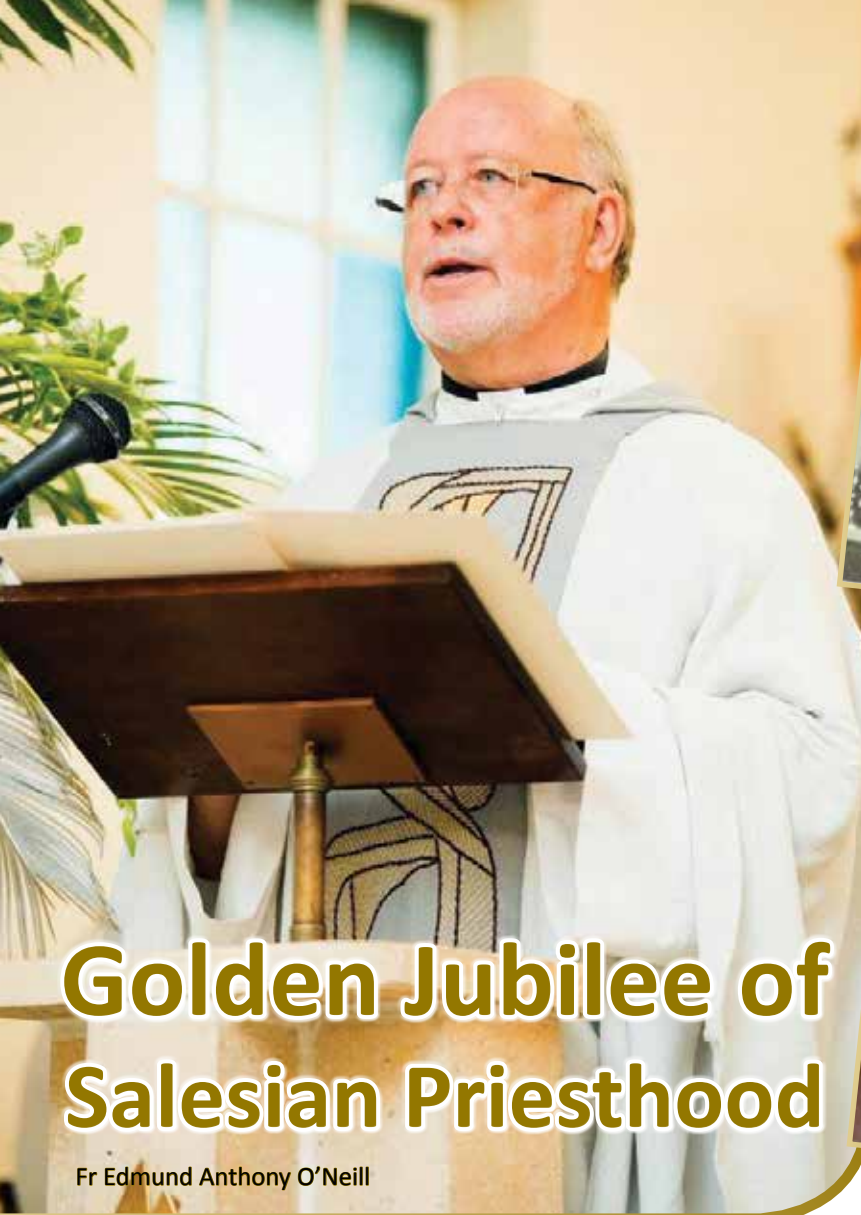
Each year, the Waves of Change Programme equips around 350 young people with Lifeskills training and offers support services to an additional 3,500 youth through a dedicated helpdesk facility.

Among the four transformative skills programmes at the Salesian Institute Youth Projects (SIYP), the Waves of Change Programme stands out, bridging resource gaps for underserved youth and delivering not just skills but hope.

For more information, please contact: Frieda Pehlivan, Communications Manager, at info@salesianyouth.org.za or visit the website: www.salesianyouth.org

Source: ANS





Golden Jubilee of Salesian Priesthood

Fr Edmund Anthony O'Neill

I was born on the 14th May 1948 in Droylsden, Manchester. The second of five children (Bernard, Edmund, Margaret, Patricia and Maureen) born to Edmund and Mary O'Neill – and baptised in St Stephen's church, less than a hundred meters from the family home. I went to St Stephen's Primary school and from there followed my brother Bernard to the Salesian Missionary College, Shrigley Park from 1959 – 1965 (junior seminary).

The Rector at the time was the late Fr George Williams who, five years later as Provincial asked

for volunteers to go to South Africa for the novitiate. Four of us were chosen and I arrived in Johannesburg after receiving the cassock and Missionary Cross at Shrigley in October 1965. After my novitiate and profession in September 1966, I commenced philosophy studies in Clonlea, before going to Salesian High school, Manzini in Swaziland for practical training and was there during the country's independence in 1968. In 1970 I went to Maynooth University in Ireland where I first completed a diploma in Philosophy (Dip.Phil.) and then after three years, graduated with a degree in Divinity (theology–



B.D.). I was ordained on 7th December 1974 at my old school at Shrigley by Bishop Brewer, the auxiliary Bishop of Shrewsbury. At 26 I was one of the youngest Salesians to be ordained priest.

In February 1975 I returned to South Africa to teach in Savio College, Lansdowne – which I did until the school closed in 1978. In the early 1980's, I was given the opportunity to attend St Paul University and Ottawa University in Canada and was among the first group of Canon Lawyers to graduate after the new Code of Canon Law came into effect in 1983 – this opened up a whole new set of pastoral opportunities in my life, for which I will ever be grateful. Thus began a very full, active and varied Salesian priestly life – as teacher, parish priest, administrator, canon lawyer, judicial vicar (eSwatini), judge of the Archdiocesan marriage tribunal, vicar for property, member of the College of Consultors, Presbyteral and Finance councils - all for more than 28 years!

I had the pleasure of serving two Cardinals; McCann and Brislin and two Archbishops; Naidoo and Henry. During my time as Vicar for Property, I was involved in the building of some 19 churches and in over a hundred property transactions (sales and purchases!), as well as dealing with the daily administrative tasks of the Archdiocese and her priests very well.

Memorable events: During this time, I was privileged and blessed to meet two of our modern-day canonised Saints – St Mother Teresa of Calcutta and St Pope John Paul II – what an amazing grace!

As a canon lawyer, I have had the unique opportunity to act as the Promotor of Justice in the successful Beatification process of Blessed Tshimangadzo Samuel Benedict Daswa and was able to greet and speak with Salesian Cardinal Angelo Amato who represented the Holy Father at the Ceremony in the Tzaneen Diocese. We are hopeful that an already submitted "potential" miracle will be accepted as such by the Sacred Congregation in Rome – thus opening the way for the first Southern African canonisation! More recently I was appointed as Promotor of Justice in the cause of the Servant of God, Benedictine Sister Reinolda "Mashinyane" May – famous for the apparitions at the Marian Shrine of Ngome. If I think for a time – I could come up with many regrets – could have done more? Could have attracted more Salesian vocations? Etc...but I do regret that I did not acquire more fluency in Zulu or seSotho!!



I would recommend to any young Catholic man that feels drawn to the priesthood or religious life – that he give himself a chance and try out the life and receive training and formation and follow the advice and guidance of the formators – then he can always be certain, whether he succeeds or not, that he followed his conscience...and reached an informed decision/choice! When I set out on the long journey, as I did, I had no idea of the many opportunities

and blessings that awaited me – thanks to God's grace.

More local vocations are greatly needed and are the life blood of the church!





Your Next Move

My name is Lucky Kapempula and I'm from Mnjoli, Eswatini. We are eight in the family, of which I am the second born. I was introduced to Salesians through MYC by my ICT teacher. I Attended Mnjoli Primary and Mnjoli High before I went to Salesian High. My ICT teacher advised me to enroll at MYC, where I was interviewed by Fr Alberto who was the director of the projects at the time in 2020. When I returned home, I got the call a few days later that I was accepted at MYC. I was very excited to be attending a school in the urban areas. I vowed that I was going to make the most of this opportunity that was given to me because it was like a stepping stone to greater heights. My parents were very happy with the opportunity that I got because they were struggling financially. It was already a month into the new academic year at Salesian High when I enrolled, so I had to catch up a lot. I was introduced to a whole new curriculum, including French which I had never learnt before. I completed my education at Salesian High in 2022.



Lucky Kapempula

I would say there is a big difference between Salesian High and other schools I have attended. The work ethic is of high quality because the students want to be seen as the top performers in the country. Something else I also noticed is the holistic approach to education, an environment that other schools don't provide. My favourite subject was Additional Mathematics. It's the type of maths being done at universities and its

quite challenging. I was inspired by Sebenele Goodwill Lukhele [MYC and Salesian High past pupil] who introduced me to this type of maths, who is currently studying Biochemistry in USA. I was blessed to receive a scholarship to attend United World Colleges in Germany to study advanced maths. It has always been my dream to get into a place like UWC because its quite prestigious. After two years in Germany, I want to attend university and specialize in the field of science. I see myself as a professor one day teaching at university.

My dream is to attain my career goals. Through my education I would like to make the life of others better and make a meaningful contribution in society. My message to other young people is to have a dream, to have a vision in life. Be a people's person because in life you will face obstacles, and you can't face the world alone. You will always need people to guide you. Know yourself, think for yourself, know your limits and weaknesses.

My dream is to attain my career goals. Through my education I would like to make the life of others better and make a meaningful contribution in society. My message to other young people is to have a dream, to have a vision in life. Be a people's person because in life you will face obstacles, and you can't face the world alone. You will always need people to guide you. Know yourself, think for yourself, know your limits and weaknesses.



Salesian Missionary Volunteering

Given Masiu

Born on May 24, 2006, in Potchefstroom, North West Province, South Africa, I am grateful for the journey that has led me to discern my calling to the priesthood.

My faith journey began with Baptism then First Holy Communion in 2015 and Confirmations at Calvary Catholic Church in 2021 by Right Reverend Bishop Victor Hlolo Phalana of the Catholic Diocese of Klerksdorp. After matriculating in 2023, I felt an inner calling to the ministry of priesthood.

Although it was too late to apply for seminary, Bishop Victor Hlolo Phalana guided me to consider Don Bosco Youth Centre as a missionary volunteer. From February to November, I immersed myself in this Salesian community, finding joy in being with young people and experiencing spiritual growth through daily Mass, weekly adoration, lectio divina and meditation.

My time at Don Bosco Youth Centre deepened my vocation discernment, and I encourage others to consider this life-changing experience. The centre provides a safe haven, away from temptations, where young people can spend a gap year serving God and learning valuable life skills.

Don Bosco Youth Centre empowers uneducated youth with practical and theoretical knowledge, instilling good personal values and decision-making. I urge South African youth to try out this volunteering program.

This place also has a rich history of producing vocations. So for those whom feel like they are still not yet sure of their vocations, Don Bosco Youth Centre is the best place for discernment. It can be any kind of vocation, not only religious vocations but also matrimonial and many more. Bosco also offers a bit of Catholic Catechism formation, it is very much best hence I recommend it for other young people.

I would also like to extend my greatest gratitude to the Salesians for the accompaniment they had granted me for the entire year. I pray and hope that their loving kindness as after their founding father Don Bosco will continue to enrich the lives of other young individuals.

The future depends on what you do today.





SR. FLORENCE, B. MULENGA

25 YEARS OF CONSECRATED LIFE

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR FAMILY BACKGROUND AND WHERE YOU COME FROM

I come from the Northern Part of Zambia, in a district called Luwingu, where the first Salesian Sisters established their initial community. I was born into the family of Mr. Festus Gabriel Mulenga and Theresa Damiano Kasonde, as the fourth of the ten children- six girls and four boys. All of us are still alive today. My father passed away on February 7, 2013, and all ten siblings were present for his burial. My mother is still alive and had the joy of celebrating my 25 years of service and fidelity to God.

My parents were practicing Catholics. I completed my primary and secondary education in the same district. During my junior secondary School years, I joined the Scripture Union, after passing my grade 10 exams, I entered a boarding school and became a member of vocation club, where we held weekly meetings. Sisters and Priests from various mission schools would come to meet young people interested in pursuing religious life or priesthood across

different congregations.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT RELIGIOUS LIFE, ESPECIALLY SALESIAN LIFE THAT ATTRACTED YOU AND MADE YOU CHOSE IT.

Religious life is a profound commitment to service, centered on God and dedicated to uplifting others. Salesian Life, in particular, is captivating for those with a passion for God and a love for young people. My own vocation began to take shape during my time at the oratory of the Salesian Sisters and continued to grow upon my return to my home parish, St. Peter, Luwingu. During my time at school, I was one of four girls from our parish living in the boarding school. We received permission every Saturday to visit the oratory at the Sister's convent, which was about three kilometers from the parish. We walked to the oratory, and the sisters kindly drove us back in time for our supper at 5pm, ensuring we never missed a meal.

The Salesian Sisters and Priests played an integral role in our education, teaching Religious Education and celebrating Masses, as well as

animating our prayer services. Special occasions like Easter, Christmas, and the feast of Don Bosco were particularly memorable, as all Catholic students were invited to participate in the celebrations at the parish.

WHAT DID YOU DO BEFORE ENTERING RELIGIOUS LIFE?

Before entering religious life, I was actively involved in parish activities for young people. I was a member of the Xaverian Movement and the Marian Group, and I completed my Grade 12 education. Following that, I participated in a "Come and See" program with the Salesian Sisters in Lusaka, the Capital City of Zambia.

Prior to my departure for the program, the Salesian Sisters Community, which welcomed young women for initial formation, visited me at my home parish. The visiting sisters from Kasama community included Sr. Maria Mazzone, Sr. Racheal Crotti, and Sr. Evelyn Saludares, along with three Zambian Aspirants: Agness Ngosa, Lorraine Nsofwa, and Constanca Chanda Nsofwa. It was a memorable moment for me, as it brought to life my aspiration to enter religious life.

REFLECTION ON 25 YEARS AS A SALESIAN SISTER

Gratitude to God: I thank God for His unwavering fidelity and the countless blessings He has bestowed upon me throughout this journey. His grace, mercy, and love have been the foundation of my life and vocation.

Gratitude to My Family: I am deeply thankful to my parents and family, who have supported me since my birth. It is within this loving environment that I learned essential Christian and human values. The spirituality cultivated in my family inspired my search for religious life and my response to God's call. I learned the importance of prayer, respect for human life, and the beauty of community living. Growing up in a large family taught me to appreciate everyone around me, regardless of age.

Gratitude to My congregation: I extend my heartfelt thanks to my congregation, my formators, fellow sisters, and the young people

I have encountered. The spiritual guidance and companionship I have received have enriched my journey of love.

Learnings from my 25 Years of Religious Life: This milestone is a moment of renewal-a time to pause, reflect, and rekindle my passion for Christ. As our co-foundress St. Maria Mazzarello advised, I am called to "rake out your ashes and let the fire flame." This is an opportunity to infuse new life, energy, and purpose into my mission as a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians.

My experiences working with young people across various countries and communities have been incredibly rewarding. Each interaction has brought blessings, both visible and hidden, known only to God, the author of life. In celebrating these 25 years, I honor my roots and express gratitude for being a gift to Christ, my family, the Church, my congregation, the young people I serve, and the world.

Have you any regrets in life?

As I reflect and pray, I acknowledge that, like anyone in any vocation, there have been moments of doubt and regret. However, as time has passed, I can confidently say that I do not regret my choice to be a religious, especially as a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians. I am truly happy with my decision, embracing both the goodness and the challenges it brings.

What advice would you give to a young person who is considering religious life?

Be pro-active and engage in your parish activities wherever you are. Participate in volunteer work within your community and parish. While it may feel strange at times due to peer pressure, remember that God speaks and teaches us in these small ways.

Listen attentively to your inner voice. Communicate openly with your family, and seek guidance from priests, religious individuals, and committed laypeople in your Catholic faith. Pray about your journey; these steps can help you discern your vocation and make the right choices in your life.





conversation with him. He asked me: what will you do at the end of your studies? I was in 6th form at secondary school at that time. I answered him that I was in a vocations group in my parish. He gave me his cell phone number and invited me to his community. The following week I replied to his invitation. We shared about Don Bosco, Salesians life and the service of young people. I appreciated it when he brought me to the oratory. I found there some confreres playing with young people and it was then that I decided wanted to be an aspirant.

MY MISSIONARY VOCATION

While I was an aspirant, I met many others like Br Honorato Alonso from Spain. I was touched by his humility, his active presence among the young, although old but always present and spending his energy with the young. I asked him many things about the mission and his joys and pains. While in post novitiate, I met also Fr Mario Valente SDB a missionary. He became my spiritual guide and shared with me his experience. From him I learnt to be close to Jesus through prayer. He used to spoke about hanging onto Jesus, so that when the storms of life come, Jesus may take us by the hand. We must be connected to God and help young people connect to God, because it is God's mission and not ours. He really touched my heart. Another missionary who inspired me was Fr Kiesling Yohan, who died last October in Congo, may he rest in peace. He was a missionary in Congo from Austria. He was 88 but was always in the midst of young people. He was well enculturated in the Congolese culture. These people helped me to have the desire of being missionary. I am now in South Africa as missionary making my first experience in the mission, language and the culture. I am very appreciative of the warm welcome given to me by the confreres here in AFM province.

My advice to young people is to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that God may help them listen to his call.

BUKENGE CHRISTOPHE

I was attracted to be a missionary by the testimony of missionaries I met. I come from a parish evangelized by Xaverian missionaries but now in charge of diocesan priests. I didn't see them in our parish but I knew them from their community in Panzi in Bukavu and in other parish. I knew them well also through some brother candidates at that time, who are now priests. For the first time I met Fr Rolando from Italy. He was kind and open to everyone. He was available to anyone especially to young people searching for their vocation. Although he was old, he had a good approach towards the young, the sick. That touched me and helped me to think about my missionary vocation. There are some points that inspired me from his life. The lord needs people to help him bring the good news to those who don't know it. Once he drew for me an image of two people on a path through the mountains. These people were without bags but with a stick in each hand. He interpreted it like people, disciples sent by Jesus to many places. I asked him how they are going to survive there; he reminded me of the gospel of LUKE 9:3.

A SALESIAN MISSIONARY

I knew Salesians through Fr Pierrot Gavioli, in my hometown of Bukavu. One evening at the cathedral, I met Fr Gavoli and had a small



**150 GIVE THANKS
RETHINK
RELAUNCH**

On 11 November, we remembered the distant 1875 when the first missionary expedition set out! The commemoration of this important event opens the celebrations for the 150th anniversary in 2025. The slogan chosen for the occasion helps us enter into this anniversary: Give thanks, Rethink, Relaunch.

Give Thanks: We give thanks to God for the gift of missionary vocation which enables the sons of Don Bosco today to reach out to poor and abandoned youth in 137 countries.

Rethink: This is an opportune occasion to rethink and develop a renewed vision on the Salesian Missions in the light of new challenges and new perspectives which led to new missiological reflections.

Relaunch: We have not only a glorious history to remember and be grateful for, but also a great history still to be accomplished! We look to the future with missionary zeal and enthusiasm so that we may reach out to even more poor and abandoned youth.

Celebrations for 150th anniversary will be mainly at the Province level: each Province is invited to undertake a concrete missionary initiative internally or to significantly strengthen existing initiatives that will become permanent signs of this celebration.

At the congregational level, the new Rector Major will preside over the missionary send-off on 11 November 2025 in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco. It is a celebration with which the Congregation renews its missionary commitment in front of Mary Help of Christians.

"All the celebrations at different levels have a single goal", explains Fr Alfred Maravilla, General Councillor for Missions, "to keep the missionary spirit and enthusiasm alive in the Congregation, in order to promote greater missionary zeal and generosity among the Salesians and the entire EPC. It is the missionary spirit of the Salesians that revitalises the Congregation, keeping it vibrant and attractive to new vocations", he pointed out.

The logo that sums up the theme was produced by Martina Mončeková, from Czechia. It shows the world globe washed by waves, that symbolize both courage and new challenges, but also dynamism and unrestrainedness. It is a growing dynamic which tends more and more towards new missionary horizons. Three red figures refer to the Salesian logo and to the fire of a renewed missionary enthusiasm. In the middle is a ship, a symbol of the first missionary expedition (1875). The picture shows us that the missionary spirit is not an individual fact, but a charismatic element left by Don Bosco to the Congregation and the entire Salesian Family. The shape of the wheel means unity and mutual connection. The logo is complemented by the three key words and the highlighted anniversary number "150".





Pope Francis announces 2025 canonizations for Carlo Acutis, Pier Giorgio Frassati

Pope Francis announced Wednesday that Blessed Carlo Acutis and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, two young Catholics beloved for their vibrant faith and witness to holiness, will be canonized during two major jubilee celebrations dedicated to young people.

The surprise announcement came at the conclusion of the pope's weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square as Francis celebrated World Children's Day.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni later confirmed that Acutis' canonization will occur during the Church's Jubilee of Teenagers taking place April 25–27, 2025, and Frassati's canonization will take place during the Jubilee of Youth from July 28–Aug. 3, 2025.

According to the Diocese of Assisi, Acutis' canonization Mass is expected to take place on Sunday, April 27, at 10:30 a.m. local time in St. Peter's Square.

Both soon-to-be saints are beloved by many Catholic young people for their enthusiastic pursuit of holiness. The two canonizations are expected to bring many young people to the Eternal City in 2025 for the Catholic Church's Jubilee of Hope.

Carlo Acutis: the first millennial saint Acutis, an Italian computer-coding teenager who died of cancer in 2006, is known for his great devotion to the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Born in 1991, Acutis is the first millennial to be beatified by the Catholic Church. Shortly after

his first Communion at the age of 7, Acutis told his mother: "To always be united to Jesus: This is my life plan."

To accomplish this, Acutis sought to attend daily Mass as often as he could at the parish church across the street from his elementary school in Milan.

Acutis called the Eucharist "my highway to heaven," and he did all in his power to make this presence known. His witness inspired his own parents to return to practicing the Catholic faith and his Hindu au pair to convert and be baptized. Acutis was a tech-savvy kid who loved computers, animals, and video games. His spiritual director has recalled that Acutis was convinced that the evidence of Eucharistic miracles could be persuasive in helping people to realize that Jesus is present at every Mass.

Over the course of two and a half years, Acutis worked with his family to put together an exhibition on Eucharistic miracles that premiered in 2005 during the Year of the Eucharist proclaimed by Pope John Paul II and has since gone on to be displayed at thousands of parishes on five continents.

Many of Acutis' classmates, friends, and family members have testified how he brought them closer to God. Acutis was a very open person and was not shy about speaking with his classmates and anyone he met about the things he loved: the Mass, the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, and heaven.

He is remembered for saying: "People who place themselves before the sun get a tan; people who place themselves before the Eucharist become saints."

Acutis died at the age of 15 in 2006, shortly after being diagnosed with leukemia. Before he died, Acutis told his mother: "I offer all of my suffering to the Lord for the pope and for the Church in order not to go to purgatory but to go straight to heaven."

Thousands of people visited Acutis' tomb in Assisi following his beatification in the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi on Oct. 10, 2020.

Pier Giorgio Frassati: 'To the heights' of holiness Frassati, who died at the age of 24 in 1925, is also beloved by many today for his enthusiastic witness to holiness that reaches "to the heights." The young man from the northern Italian city of Turin was an avid mountaineer and Third Order Dominican known for his charitable outreach.

Born on Holy Saturday, April 6, 1901, Frassati was the son of the founder and director of the Italian newspaper La Stampa.

At the age of 17, he joined the St. Vincent de Paul Society and dedicated much of his spare time to taking care of the poor, the homeless, and the sick as well as demobilized servicemen returning from World War I.

Frassati was also involved in the Apostleship of Prayer and Catholic Action. He obtained permission to receive daily Communion. On a photograph of what would be his last climb, Frassati wrote the phrase "Verso L'Alto," which means "to the heights." This phrase has become a motto for Catholics inspired by Frassati to strive for the summit of eternal life with Christ. Frassati died of polio on July 4, 1925. His doctors later speculated that the young man had caught polio while serving the sick.

John Paul II, who beatified Frassati in 1990, called him a "man of the eight beatitudes," describing him as "entirely immersed in the mystery of God and totally dedicated to the constant service of his neighbor." The Vatican has yet to announce the recognition of the second miracle attributed to Frassati, which made his canonization possible. The confirmation of the miracle from the Vatican, along with the announcement of the specific date of Frassati's canonization Mass, are expected in the future.

Courtney Mares
Catholic News Agency
Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati to be canonized in 2025: Pope Francis makes surprise announcement | Catholic News Agency





Cl. Reece -
Practical Training



Cl. Nhlanhla -
Specific Formation



Br. Joseph -
Specific Formation



Cl. Lebohang -
Post Novice



Cl. Thabiso -
Practical Training



Romeo -
Novice



Paul -
Novice



Khunong -
Novice



Nathaniel -
Novice



Tsepo -
Aspirant



Bazo -
Aspirant

Salesian Initial Formation

AFM Province

Salesians of Don Bosco

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