



Volume 1, Issue 2

Don Bosco

A Publication of the Province of St. Philip the Apostle

Insights



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Photo credits | Cover: Vicky Weekley

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On Faithfulness

My dear readers,

Has anyone important in your life ever let you down? Did someone tell you they would do something, and then they either forgot or just changed their mind? Has anyone ever made a promise to you and then broke that promise? And then, the biggest question of all—have you ever done any of these things to someone else?

Today we come to the fruit of faithfulness. The word “faithfulness” is related to the word “faith.” When a person is faithful, you can trust them. You can put your faith in them, and they won’t let you down. It’s the same way with God. When we say God is faithful, we mean He is dependable—He is reliable, and He can be trusted.

Faithfulness is such an important quality for us to develop as believers. All relationships are built on trust. When you grow in faithfulness, people will learn they can depend on you, and you will enjoy stronger, healthier relationships with the people in your life. Another reason faithfulness is so important is because God rewards faithfulness. God is looking for people who will be faithful to Him and His kingdom so that we may bring great glory and honor to Him.

This year, the set of fifteen jubilarians include men who have accepted the call and were faithful. These have gone to places, accepted assignments that might not have been to their liking but went anyway in obedience to their superior. To me that is noble! There have been others who have started new forms of ministry and new ways of working in already set ministries.

All of them have actively done a lot of good by touching lives, especially the poor and marginalized in parishes, schools, technical schools and youth centers. Some have been instrumental in forming young Salesians.

All of them are saints in their own right, and this is evident from the various articles on the lives of our jubilarians that are in this issue. While the senior jubilarians have left a legacy, the younger ones are in the process of forging their own legacies. Their faithfulness to their commitment as priests and religious has enabled these milestones, but it is not merely a personal achievement. It is a gift from God—and a gift to others and the province.

Although precious, faithfulness is a rare virtue today. Perhaps in the Church also. The Bible has many references to it. But Proverbs 28:20, in particular, says that faithfulness is the key to God’s blessings.

Thank you, dear jubilarians, for living a life of witness. Congratulations on reaching these important milestones, and may God continue to shower you with His graces so that you may continue to be “courageous Salesian missionaries” as described in the late Holy Father Pope Francis’ post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Christus Vivit*—“Witnesses of the Gospel wherever you find yourself, by the way you live.”

God bless you.

In Mary Help of Christians,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Fr. Franco".

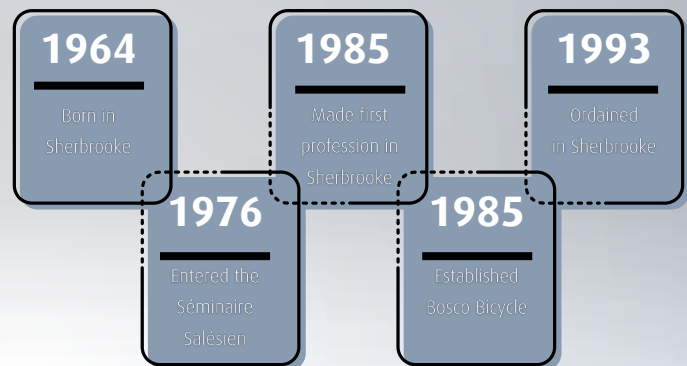
Fr. Franco Pinto, SDB
Vice-Provincial



Fr. Alain Léonard

By Fr. Richard Authier, SDB

Fr. Alain would greet you, “*Bonjour du Canada!*” It is with joy that I share some of his stories and events as a Salesian confrere. After all, I was his master of novices, many moons ago! I often tease him that, because of his religious profession at the end of his novitiate, I became the only master of novices who has had a perfect record—100 percent success. And he’s still a Salesian today!



Fr. Alain was born in Sherbrooke, QC, on June 28, 1964. His fine parents are named Lyse and Gilles. Fr. Alain was almost born in the schoolyard of our Salesian High School in Sherbrooke.

“My family house was five minutes from the school,” Fr. Alain explained. “The Salesians were our neighbors.”

Maybe God decided ahead of time that he would be a fine Salesian!

Fr. Alain began to realize his vocation while he was in secondary school. “During my journey from secondary one to secondary five, I was attracted by Don Bosco,” he began. “Fr. Paul talked about this great saint, and it attracted me to Don Bosco and, of course, the Salesians.” Some of the Salesians with whom Fr. Alain bonded with included Fr. Jacques, Fr. Luc, and me. “There were a bunch of Salesians, and they were very close to young people in many different pastoral activities,” Fr. Alain explained. “I was involved in a group organized by Fr. Richard. We had Gospel nights, which were fun, and a trip to New Jersey to honor Fr. Viganò, the Rector Major at that time.”

That trip was Fr. Alain’s first one with the Salesians, and Fr. Alain found himself surprised by the energy he found around the Rector Major, Salesians, and young people. It led him to visit Don Bosco Tech in Boston, MA, and the Salesian seminary in Ipswich, MA. “It was another vocation to see the Salesians in action in that big setup in downtown Boston,” he beamed. “And it was there where I discovered my ‘yes.’”



Salesian life is wonderful when you can smile every day to everyone.

Fr. Alain was a student at Séminaire Salésien from 1976 to 1981. During those years, I was a religion teacher and the school chaplain. Fr. Alain was a fine and successful student. He also quickly developed a friendship with several of the Salesian confreres of the time. These included, but are not limited to, Fr. Jacques Donne, Fr. Paul Cossette, Fr. Romeo Trottier, Bro. Marcel Gauthier, and others. Again, a vocation seed was blossoming. He celebrated his first vows on September 1, 1985.

Fr. Alain's practical training took place in the school he had grown up in, the Séminaire Salésien, from 1987 to 1989. On September 21, 1991, he pronounced his perpetual vows. His pedagogical and theological studies for the priesthood were carried out in the University of Sherbrooke for pedagogical studies, and the Salesian Pontifical University (UPS) in Rome, Italy, for his theological studies. He was ordained a Salesian priest in Sherbrooke on June 5, 1993.

"Salesian life is wonderful when you can smile every day to everyone," Fr. Alain offered. "If you want to talk about Jesus, you have to put that smile in your face."

In the numerous years that Fr. Alain was assigned to Séminaire Salésien, he has been an energetic and creative coordinator of youth ministry (CYM). He also served as the school's professor of the religious courses. He offered to the school students the summer activity of the "Bosco Bicycle" camp. These were one-week journeys, well filled with faith growth moments.

Photos, top to bottom:

(1) Fr. Alain Léonard, SDB, and his mother

(2) Fr. Alain Léonard, SDB, and Le Salésien students

Credit: Fr. Alain Léonard, SDB



*Fr. Alain Léonard, SDB, and Le Salesien students
Credit: Fr. Alain Léonard, SDB*

"I'm very proud [of Bosco Bicycle], and I can see the results for the kids," Fr. Alain beamed. "They are very attached and close to the Salesians. The camp is a beautiful way for the youths to grow in both a human and a spiritual way." The camp lasts a full week, at the end of which young people are closer to Jesus. "This is because we are living the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist and we have Good Nights and Good Mornings," Fr. Alain remarked. "Bosco Bicycle is unique and original, thanks to the young councilors and the presence of the Salesians at the house. It's a beautiful moment."

He also launched the sending of the older students to short-term missionary activities in Mexico. After the death of Fr. Romeo Trottier, he also took on the management of Camp Savio, where thousands of youths and families have had beautiful summer holidays and activities.

As we celebrate his fortieth anniversary of profession, we can thank the Lord, Don Bosco, and Mary Help for his zealous pastoral life on behalf of the young. May Fr. Alain be with us for many more years.

60 Years Professed

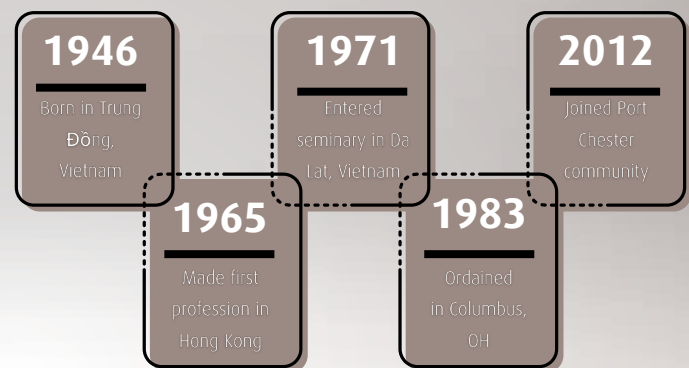


Fr. Joe Vien Hoang, SDB
Credit: Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

Fr. Joe Vien Hoang

By Fr. Pat Angelucci, SDB

Fr. Joe was ordained in May 1983, and his first assignment was to St. Rosalie Parish in Harvey, LA. He was a member of the Archbishop Shaw High School (Shaw) community, where I had been recently appointed director. Fr. Joe worked at the parish and taught at the school. Later, he would live at Shaw and teach full time. Those five years living together were a great experience, and I learned a lot from Joe and about him.



In 2012, Fr. Joe left Louisiana to become associate pastor at Corpus Christi Parish in Port Chester, NY. In 2015, we once again found ourselves together. For the next nine years, we worked to merge the four Port Chester parishes into one new parish of St. John Bosco.

When I think of Fr. Joe Vien, there is one word that immediately comes to my mind: **faithfulness**. Fr. Joe is Salesian through and through. While in theology he had to flee Vietnam and came to the States. Here, he had to search out the Salesians and once he found us, he found that in order to continue he had to learn English, once again do practical training, and begin theology all over again! He could have easily left to join a diocese or some other religious congregation, but he stayed with Don Bosco! Keeping with his Salesian vocation was hard, but Joe remained **faithful**.

In the fourteen years we lived together, a characteristic of Fr. Joe that always influenced me was his **fidelity** to prayer. Always present at community prayer, you often found him alone with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament during the day. Fr. Joe is a man of prayer and sustained by prayer.

No matter what his duties entail, Fr. Joe is steady and consistent and **faithfully** fulfills his responsibilities. Whether it was teaching a class in mathematics or religion, local treasurer and provider for the community, preparing young adults for the sacraments in RCIA or simply being attentive to the many little tasks in community that many of us never think about, like watering the plants, checking the doors, replacing things that broke or checking our credit card receipts, Fr. Joe is there **faithfully**, quietly and consistently fulfilling his responsibilities.



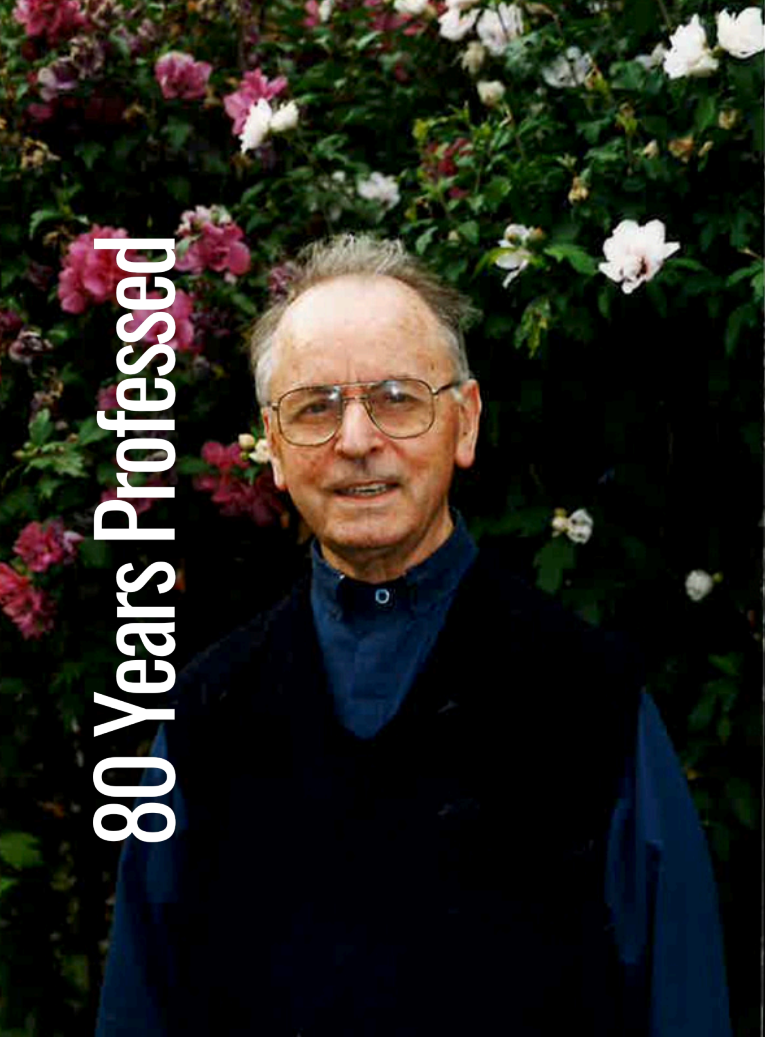
Salesians in Port Chester celebrate Fr. Joe's 40th anniversary of ordination in 2023.
Credit: St. John Bosco Parish, Port Chester, NY



I remember hearing once “the obedient man is the available man.” Fr. Joe certainly fits that description. Never once do I recall Fr. Joe being asked to do something and his not **faithfully** doing it—and often it was not easy, or convenient or something that he was naturally inclined to do, but Joe did it and does it!

As we honor Fr. Joe today, the one word that sums him up is **faithfulness**!

80 Years Professed

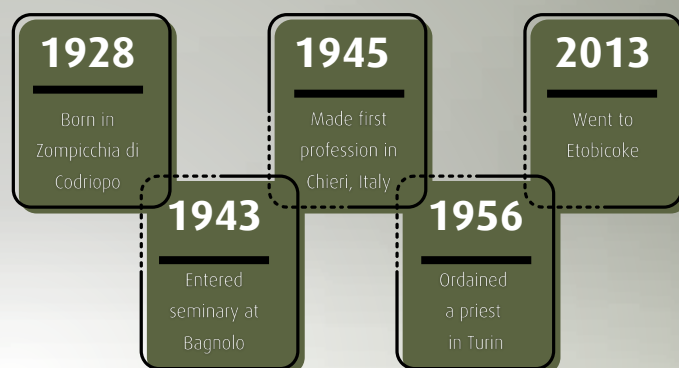


Fr. Enzo Trigatti, SDB
Credit: Fr. John Puntino, SDB

Fr. Enzo Trigatti

*By Fr. John Puntino, SDB,
from Fr. Enzo's autobiographical notes*

Nicknamed the “energizer bunny” because he “keeps going and going” at ninety-seven years old, Fr. Enzo ministers at St. Benedict Parish in Etobicoke, ON, with weekly confessions, Italian Mass on Sundays, and communion calls to the shut-ins. He also assists with chores around the church and rectory daily.



Enzo Trigatti was born on February 24, 1928, in the village of Zompicchia di Codriopo, Friuli, in northeastern Italy. He describes his family as simple and full of faith. The priests of the parish were “hearty and loving,” his companions “good and without wickedness,” which led to Enzo having an early desire to become a priest. However, with his father abroad for work and World War II on the horizon, seminary life seemed beyond reach. Then a Salesian Cooperator arranged for him to enter the Salesian minor seminary at Bagnolo (Cumeo).

Though he initially intended to become a diocesan priest, he quickly discovered his Salesian vocation from the Salesians’ family atmosphere, goodness, knowledge of Don Bosco, and climate of piety. World War II caused the relocation of the minor seminary to Castelnuovo Don Bosco. From there, Enzo entered the Salesian novitiate at Villa Moglia, near Chieri.

Eighty years ago, on August 16, 1945, Bro. Enzo made his first profession at seventeen years old! After he undertook philosophy studies at Foglizzo, he did practical training at Castelnuovo Don Bosco and Colle Don Bosco, then theology studies at Bollengo.

On July 1, 1956, he was ordained a priest in the presence of his mother, who came from Canada, where the family had immigrated. His first Mass was at the altar of St. Dominic Savio in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians.

His assignments saw him offer his Salesian priestly ministry in the formation houses for Salesian brothers at Colle Don Bosco and Cumiana and in vocation ministry out of the Salesian centre in Ivrea.



*Bro. Kevin White, Fr. Enzo Trigatti, Fr. John Puntino, Fr. Frank Kelly, and Fr. Drago Granik, SDBs
Credit: St. Benedict Parish, Etobicoke, ON*

In 1973, his life took a major change of direction as he took up responsibilities at the Salesian General Headquarters in Rome (*"la Pisana"*), where he worked in the general secretary's office. During his twenty-three years performing secretarial duties, he attended Lateran University and received the licentiate in pastoral theology. He was also instrumental in establishing a Saturday catechetical program for the children of families who belonged to the local parish located at the headquarters' chapel. These were years of hard work, but with the pleasure of seeing and hearing the Rector Major and many provincials and missionaries who came to meet the major superiors.

In 1996, then-Father, now Bishop Luc Van Looy, as vicar of the Rector Major and superior of the General Headquarters communities, told Fr. Enzo it was time for a change. Fr. Enzo showed holy indifference as he enumerated possible assignments where he thought he could be of service. And so he received the assignment to go to Maria Ausiliatrice Parish in Montréal, QC, to help with the Italian apostolate. While there, he began an afternoon Eucharistic Adoration apostolate and acted as spiritual director to a charismatic prayer group.



[Fr. Enzo is] nicknamed the 'energizer bunny' because he 'keeps going and going' at ninety-seven years old.

As the SUE province was undergoing a round of restructuring, the Salesians withdrew from administering the parish in 2013. Consequently, Fr. Enzo came to St. Benedict Parish in Etobicoke (Toronto), ON. He assisted Fr. Joseph Occhio in the Italian apostolate and assumed full responsibility after Fr. Occhio's death in December 2014.



Here Fr. Enzo Trigatti, "the holy energizer battery," remains, highly regarded for his witness of prayer in the adoration chapel at various times throughout the day and greatly appreciated as he quietly goes about his apostolic and community responsibilities... "until the Lord will call me."

Photos, top to bottom:

(1) Fr. Enzo and his grandmother

(2) Fr. Enzo celebrates a Mass of Thanksgiving in 1956.

(3) Fr. Enzo enters the seminary.

Credit: Fr. Enzo Trigatti, SDB

60 Years Professed

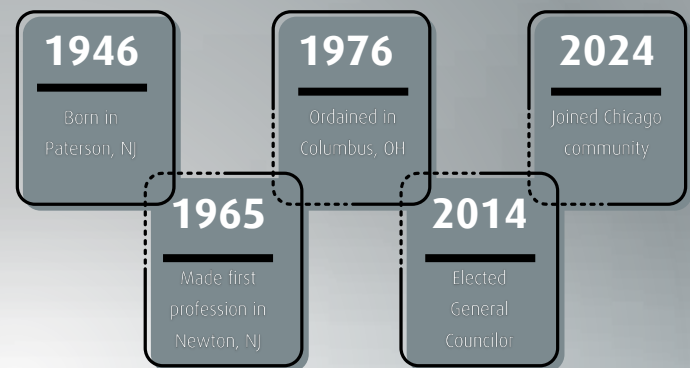


Fr. Tim Ploch, SDB
Credit: Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

Fr. Tim Ploch

By Fr. Tim Zak, SDB

Fr. Timothy C. Ploch made his religious profession as a Salesian of Don Bosco on August 16, 1965. He was in the first novitiate class of Fr. Peter Granzotto, professing with 45 others. Ten years ago, on their fiftieth anniversary of profession, some of that first group were able to reunite with their novice master, Fr. Peter, who was eighty-nine years old at the time, an outstanding example of fidelity to his vocation as a Salesian of Don Bosco.



"It was an amazing opportunity," Fr. Tim shared. "I had been with [Fr. Peter] many other times over fifty years in many assignments. The whole thing was beautiful."

Fr. Tim Ploch has given his own outstanding example of fidelity and service as a son of Don Bosco in the sixty years of his religious life, fulfilling numerous roles of leadership including principal, pastor, director, provincial of both the SUE and SUO provinces, and general councilor for the Interamerica Region.

The most important aspect Fr. Tim felt he gained from a global perspective during his time as General Councilor for the Interamerica Region was the ability to contact young people and help them all over the world. "It's not just 'us,'" he elaborated. "It's one thing to know that in your mind, but it's another thing we don't see upfront."

Throughout the years as a Salesian, Fr. Tim has been supported in his vocation and found inspiration in other Salesians. He recalled Fr. Bernard Justen, his first director when he entered the Don Bosco Juniorate in West Haverstraw (Stony Point) in 1960. Fr. Justen manifested Don Bosco's fatherliness and gentleness, concerned for each young person in the school.

Fr. Tim also remembered Bro. Robert Grant, who recognized his musical talent and pushed him to learn to play the organ. This made a big difference in Fr. Tim's life. While he was in Don Bosco College, Newton, NJ, Fr. Joseph Herzog, also a great musician, would be an inspiration. Fr. Herzog was one of the young people Bl. Titus Zeman helped escape Communist Slovakia to pursue his vocation as a Salesian, a life story of overcoming serious obstacles to become a man of faith and culture. Fr. Tim would be with Fr. Herzog again in Columbus, OH.



*Fr. Tim with youths during his time as the general councilor for the Interamerica Region
Credit: Bollettino Salesiano*

Fr. Joseph Tyminski followed Fr. Herzog as director while Fr. Tim was preparing for Salesian priesthood. Fr. Tyminski inspired Fr. Tim and the other students of theology with his deep love for the Church, for the liturgy, for Don Bosco and the Salesian charism. These same qualities later moved Fr. Tim to recommend Fr. Tyminski as a member of the provincial council when Fr. Tim became provincial of the SUE province.

Fr. Tim has been inspired by Fr. Dennis Donovan, an example of Salesian joy, a friend to confreres and many others, who faced illness with courage and faith. Similar qualities were found in Fr. Augustine Woon Taek Baek, who likewise inspired Fr. Tim, especially in the few years they were together in New Rochelle. Upon his return to New Rochelle after his service on the General Council, Fr. Tim worked with Fr. Gus at Salesian Missions. Fr. Gus was open to God's will, leaving the Reborn Young Christ (RYC) Center after many years and beginning a new ministry at Salesian Missions. Fr. Tim witnessed in Fr. Gus a depth and balance of character, the capacity to adapt, a desire to help the poor in the Salesian missions throughout the world, a celebration of life and faith even to his untimely death. These Salesians, along with Fr. Gennaro Sesto, Fr. James Curran and many others, have been an inspiration to Fr. Tim in his vocation, even as Fr. Tim has been an inspiration, guide, friend and brother to many others.



***[Finding hope is]
just by being with [young
people] in our works
and presences.***

There have been several significant, even life-changing, moments for Fr. Tim in these sixty years as a Salesian of Don Bosco. Among them, he counts the opportunity to attend General Chapter 22 in 1984. The five months of the Chapter, tasked with revising the Constitutions and Regulations, served almost as a second novitiate, inserting the Salesians into living the charismatic Rule of Life, not just following a collection of rules. It was a “gamechanger” for Fr. Tim, an experience and knowledge which he would share many times with confreres in workshops and as a formator.



While attending General Chapter 27 in 2014 as provincial of the SUO province, Fr. Tim was elected general councilor for the Interamerica Region. Working closely with Fr. Ángel Fernandez Arttime, the tenth successor of Don Bosco, and the other members of the General Council, Fr. Tim gained a global perspective of the Salesian spirit and mission. During the six years of extensive travel, countless meetings and reports, he witnessed the vibrancy and diversity of the charism, and he was able to help the Congregation live the Rule as a way that leads to love. In less dramatic ways, the opportunity to be an educator, to share a love for music and to accompany others to an encounter with Christ in the sacraments have also been significant.

Fr. Tim finds hope in both the province and young people by being with youths. “[Finding hope is] just by being with [young people] in our works and presences,” he explained. “They’re positive, they give you hope.”

Photos, top to bottom:

*(1) Fr. Tim with the former Rector Major, now Cardinal Angel Fernandez Arttime, SDB
Credit: Bollettino Salesiano*

*(2) Fr. Tim distributes ashes to Salesian High students on Ash Wednesday 2022.
Credit: Salesian High School, New Rochelle, NY*



*Fr. Tim speaks at the National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Stony Point, NY.
Credit: Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB*

Anchored in hope, still accompanying the young, Fr. Tim shares where he finds hope today. Despite a myriad of challenges in the world, such as poverty, climate change, migration, and unjust distribution of wealth, Fr. Tim feels the optimistic humanism of St. Francis de Sales (Const. 17), recognizing the good in others, the beauty of creation and the active presence of God in history. He finds hope in the Salesian Congregation, having seen so much good being done by SDBs and lay partners in the Interamerica Region and beyond.

As regional, he has had firsthand knowledge of how Don Bosco's mission is alive and well in so many places. His work in the mission office further confirmed people's lively dedication of the mission of education and evangelization, in the missionary presences and with benefactors. Fr. Tim finds hope in the Province of St. Philip the Apostle. This time of change is being met with a willingness to relaunch the Salesian mission, young people are still attracted to the Salesian vocation and the elder confreres give authentic witness of fidelity. The SDBs and collaborators are learning to respond to the challenges of the mission with renewed zeal and creativity, as Fr. Hugo Orozco proposed in his recent visitation.

As a true Salesian, Fr. Tim finds hope in young people. He recalls the significant presence of young people at General Chapter 28, when they asked the SDBs to return to their roots and be present to the young. Hope is evident in young people of the works of the province, for example the dynamic group of young adults in Chicago, who desire to know Christ in the Scriptures, in the Eucharist and in service. Hope can be found in our immigrant brothers and sisters, bravely fleeing from extreme poverty, violence, natural disasters, etc., to arrive in a new land, hoping to support their families and willing to contribute to society.

Pilgrims of hope with Fr. Tim Ploch, we congratulate him on sixty years of profession as a Salesian of Don Bosco. We also thank him for inspiring us, challenging us and helping us encounter Jesus, the reason for our hope. (1 Pt. 3.15)

50 Years Professed

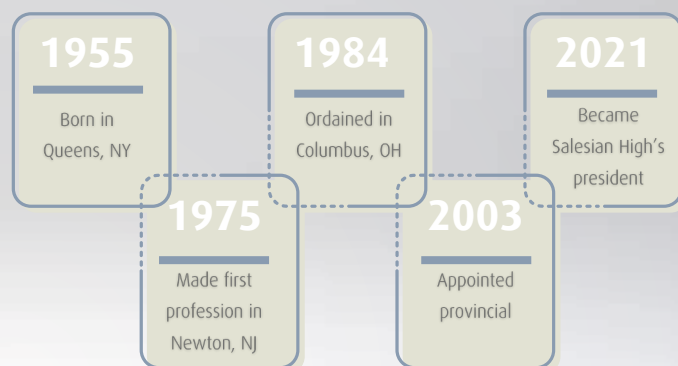


Fr. Jim Heuser, SDB
Credit: Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

Fr. Jim Heuser

By Fr. Tom Dunne, SDB

On September 1, 1975, James “Jim” Heuser made his profession as a consecrated religious in the Salesian Congregation. He had been previously vested by Fr. Aloysius Ricceri, SDB (Rector Major), on Pentecost, May 18, 1975. Upon reflection, it is important to note that Fr. Jim’s first profession was made during a special time of blessing, the Jubilee Year of 1975.



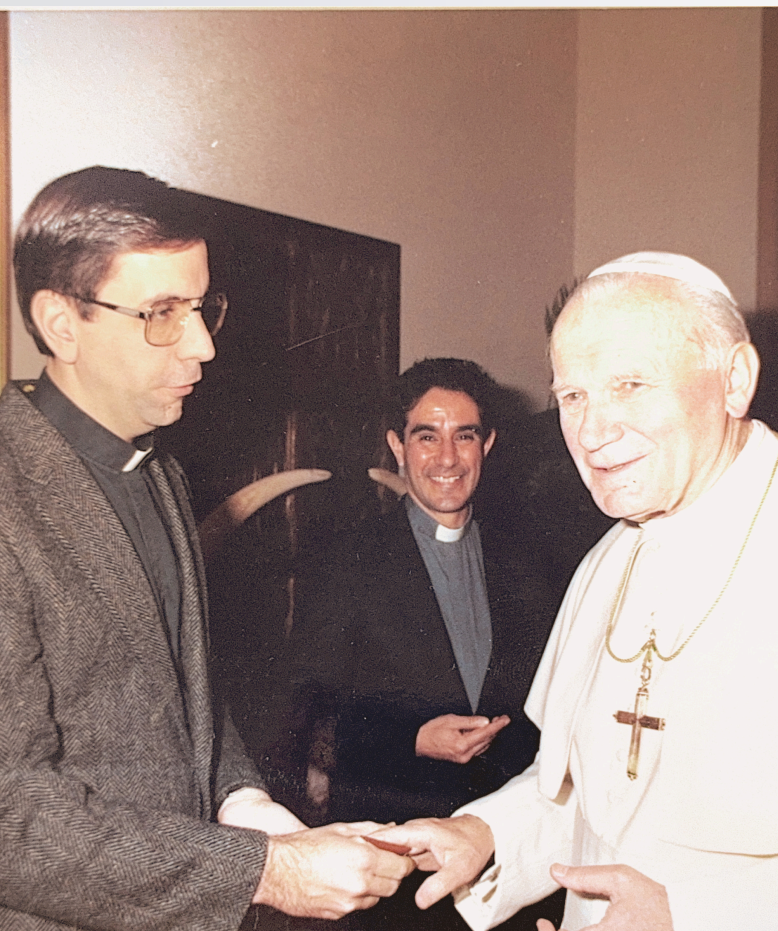
Fr. Jim (center) with his family on the day of his first profession, September 1, 1975
Credit: Fr. Jim Heuser, SDB

Fr. Jim was raised in a family of five: his mom (Loretta), dad (Warren), brother (Thomas), sister (Teresa), and himself. The Heusers lived in the Glendale section of Queens, New York. The parish community of St. Pancras served as the religious center of the family and neighborhood.



*Above all, God
has been very
gracious to me.*

After graduating from his parish grammar school, Fr. Jim joined his brother at Salesian Junior Seminary in Goshen, NY, for his secondary education. As his time in high school drew to a close, Fr. Jim entered a rather difficult period of discernment with regard to his possible call to life as a Salesian of Don Bosco. This discernment caused Fr. Jim to reflect deeply on God's presence in his life and the signs of God's call to religious life. This spirit of vocational discernment would characterize every phase of Fr. Jim's life as a disciple of Christ and a Salesian of Don Bosco.



In a very real way, the fiftieth anniversary that we celebrate today follows the ongoing formation that Fr. Jim underwent, by God's hand, through all the experiences of his religious life.

In the beginning, Fr. Jim found this discernment of God's call to be a great struggle. When the day of first profession as a Salesian arrived on September 1, 1975, Fr. Jim found himself to be a fragile nineteen-year-old, convinced he was not good enough. However, he was buoyed by very strong encouragement from Fr. Ted Ciampi (novice director) and Fr. Dave DeBurgh (confessor of the novices) to say "yes" to God's call.

"Above all, God has been very gracious to me," he exclaimed.

*Photos, top to bottom:
(1) Fr. Jim speaks at the 2024 Jubilees reception.
Credit: Salesian Youth Ministry
(2) Fr. Jim meets St. Pope John Paul II.
Credit: Arturo Mari*



*Fr. Jim receives the cassock from the Rector Major Fr. Aloysius Ricci, SDB, on Pentecost, May 18, 1975
Credit: Fr. Jim Heuser, SDB*

In reflecting on his life and ministries over the past fifty years, Fr. Jim has identified some of the ways God graciously formed him at each stage of his vocational journey.

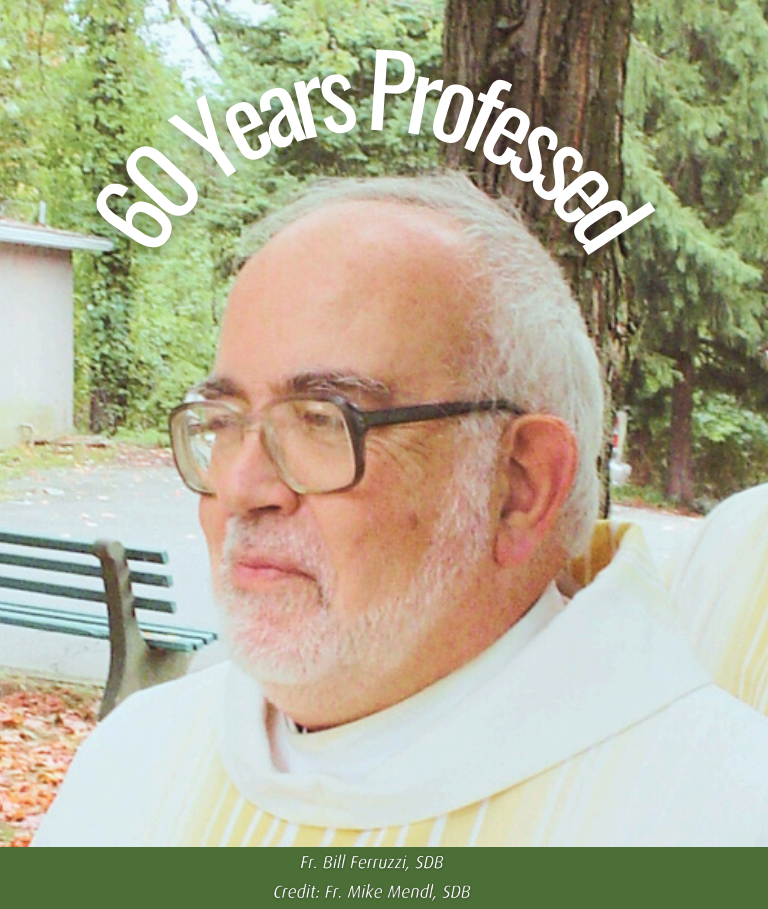
- His years in vocation animation helped Fr. Jim to appreciate more deeply the uniqueness of God's call and the qualities needed to enter religious life as a Salesian of Don Bosco.
- His years in the ministries of vocations and formation (South Orange, Orange, and 12th Street) led him to understand more deeply the meaning of Salesian consecration.
- His years in schools (Boston, Ramsey, and New Rochelle) led him to grasp the truth of Don Bosco's words that youth are "that part of society most exposed to danger and yet so rich in promise," and to see the Salesian oratory, formed by SDBs and laity together, as an inspired response.
- His years in province leadership (vice provincial and provincial) helped him appreciate each confrere's life as a grace and a mystery, with God working in each, and how only together can we be Don Bosco today.

As the Province of St. Philip, we, Fr. Jim's confreres, have shared in his vocational journey through the various ways that he has served our Congregation. We add our own words of appreciation for the formation God has offered us through Fr. Jim's participation in the life of the SUE Province.

- Infusing a deep knowledge of Don Bosco's charism, mission, and spirituality into the animation of our province, communities, and works – especially in the formation shared with our lay colleagues and families.
- Establishing a system of governance that is based on fidelity to the Salesian Rule of Life and the basic principles of our mission within the Catholic Church.
- Witnessing a desire to reach out to those struggling on the margins of society to feel the acceptance of God's mercy and to receive the hope of accompaniment while seeking their place with family, friends, and society.
- Having the humility and compunction to take up a transformative process in which we admit our failings as sons of Don Bosco and seek reconciliation and just recompense with those we have offended.
- Bringing the blessings of effective scripture-based preaching to our province celebrations of anniversaries, funerals, and major gatherings.

We join with Fr. Jim Heuser in exclaiming, "Above all, God has been very gracious to me!"

Fr. Jim, we praise God and thank you for your "yes" over the past half-century!

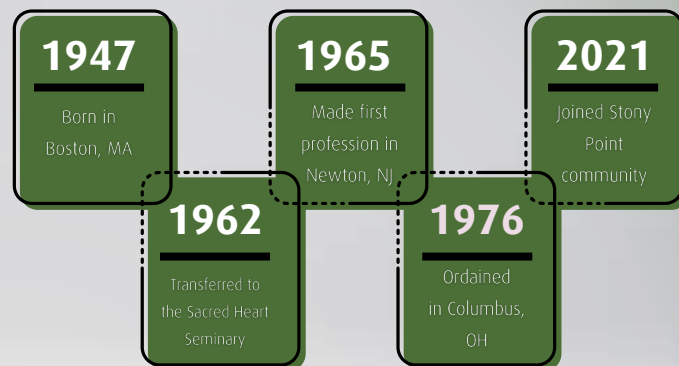


Fr. Bill Ferruzzi, SDB
Credit: Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

Fr. Bill Ferruzzi

By Julia St. Clair, Province Communications Director

Fr. Bill Ferruzzi was “born in (but not quite) the shadow of Fenway Park,” as he put it. The doctor who delivered him was his godmother’s husband. Fr. Bill’s parents raised him and his sister in Revere, “the Gateway to the North Shore,” about ten miles north of Boston, MA.



As he grew up and attended Revere public schools for eight years, Fr. Bill became fascinated with church—and the Church herself. “I recreated church in my bedroom,” he shared. “The worst punishment I had was when Mom went, ‘I’m going to take down your altar!’”

Indeed, his call to be a religious was “like a melody in the background.” Whenever reminders and signs appeared, Fr. Bill would hear that melody and go, “Here’s that song again.”

The “song” revealed itself in small ways that increased as Fr. Bill grew into adolescence. “My [grade school] principal told Dad, ‘Your son is either going to be a priest or a deep-sea diver.’” His classmates also knew of Fr. Bill’s desire to be a priest. “They’d often ask me, ‘Father, when are you going to do my wedding?’” he disclosed.

Fr. Bill’s first major crossroad appeared as he discerned where to attend high school. He needed to choose between Catholic or public school and needed a push in the right direction. After he didn’t get into his top school Malden Catholic, he confided in his guidance counselor, who invited young Fr. Bill into his office. There he handed him a leaflet of St. Dominic Savio High School in East Boston, then newly opened—and the first work in the SUE Province named after St. Dominic Savio. “He encouraged me to take a shot,” Fr. Bill conveyed.

Fr. Bill took the exam, was accepted into, and started St. Dominic Savio High School. He thrived there and won the provincial catechism contest during his freshman year. To collect his prize, he needed to travel to the Salesian Provincial Center in New Rochelle, NY. “It was my first trip away from home,” Fr. Bill began. “I got to New Rochelle in the rain with no one to pick me up at the train station. I took a taxi to the Provincial House and wandered around the porch. Bros. John Zito, Jerome Cincotta, and Alfred Rinaldi asked me what I was doing. And I became the guest of brothers—they made me their guest for dinner! I always remember the brothers who took me in.”



Fr. Stella was relentless with me because he knew if I didn't get a good shove from behind, I'd hold out as long as I could.

While in New Rochelle, Fr. Bill also met Fr. Joseph Stella, who'd later have a huge impact on his life when the elder Salesian became the director of East Boston the following year. Fr. Stella was known for having a gut instinct for vocations—and who had them.

"He'd constantly ask me, 'How'd you like to be a Salesian?' I blew [his questions] off till my silliness and luck ran out," Fr. Bill laughed. "Fr. Stella was relentless with me because he knew if I didn't get a good shove from behind, I'd hold out as long as I could."

First, Fr. Stella invited Fr. Bill to Thanksgiving dinner in Ipswich. "I thought my mother would never allow it, and that was my escape out," Fr. Bill divulged. "Mom said, 'If you want to [go], it's ok.' It became my decision, and I reluctantly agreed. So, I had Thanksgiving dinner with priests, brothers, and seminarians."

Although Fr. Bill had a great time, he still was on the fence. But Fr. Stella knew Fr. Bill had a religious calling—and he wouldn't let up.

"Fr. Stella pulled out an application for the seminary, called Mom, and said that I said I had a calling, though I didn't say that," Fr. Bill reminisced. "He talked to her to let me go to the seminary. The application sat on the table at home for six weeks. When I asked Dad why he didn't sign, he said it was because he wanted to make sure it was my choice first. After that, he signed, and, as they say, the rest is history."

Photos, top to bottom:
 (1) Fr. Bill takes a selfie with the late Fr. Gus Baek, SDB.
 (2) Fr. Bill snaps a selfie with the Salesian Eagle.
 Credit: Fr. Bill Ferruzzi, SDB





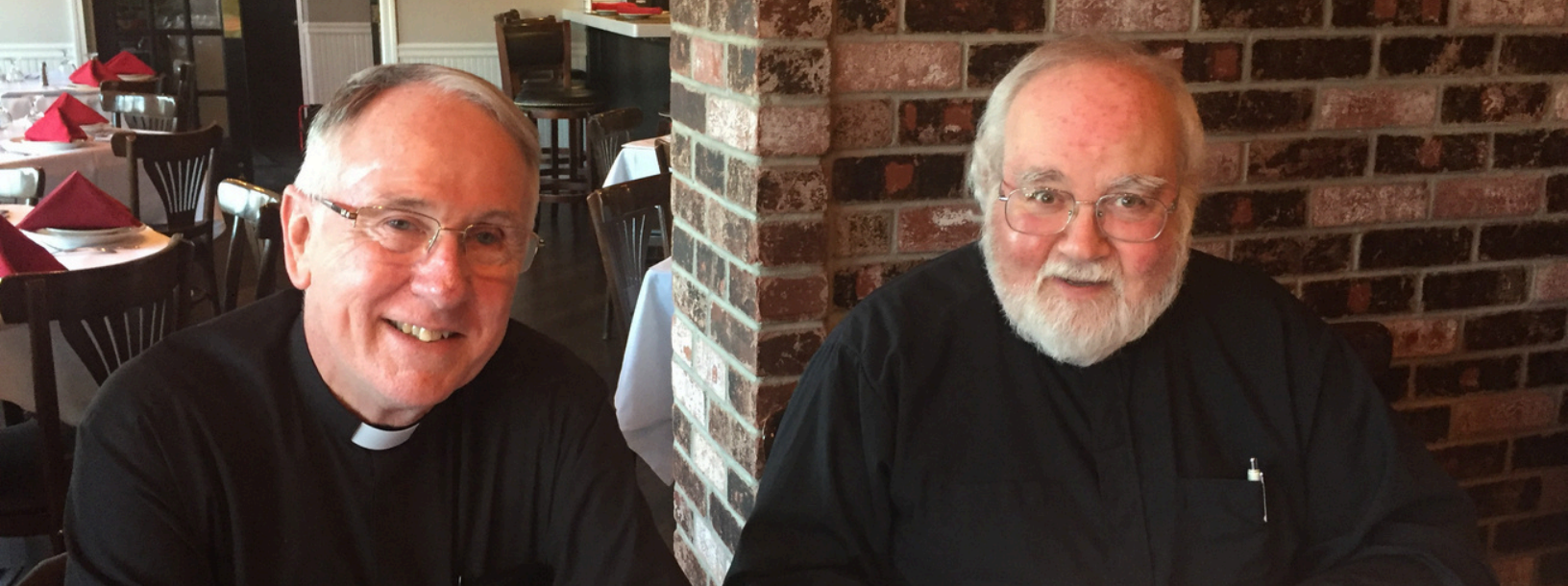
*Former Salesian High School students take a photo with Fr. Bill
Credit: Fr. Bill Ferruzzi, SDB*

In fall 1962, Fr. Bill transferred to Sacred Heart Seminary in Ipswich, MA. He had a “beautiful experience” and, despite the tough environment (for example, there was no eating between meals), had a wonderful two years. He remained in awe of Fr. Stella, whom he described as being a “good vocation director, even though that wasn’t his official title.”

“Fr. Stella knew when a person had a possible vocation and signs of intrecation, when someone wouldn’t make a good Salesian,” Fr. Bill explained. “He reminded me that, to be a good Salesian, you need to have a spirit of sacrifice.”

Since he made his first profession in 1965, Fr. Bill has had many assignments and favorite memories from every place where he’s served. “One memory that sticks out was when I was the director of Columbus, OH, in the late 1990s and early 2000s,” Fr. Bill exclaimed. “A lot of the kids [at the Salesian Boys and Girls Club] weren’t Catholic, and, though we did not proselytize, we encouraged them (ex. If someone was Baptist, we’d encourage them to be a good Baptist). When the National Evangelization Team (NET) came in, one kid said at the end he’d like to join the team, even though he wasn’t Catholic.”

“Although [the Columbus Salesian Boys and Girls Club] was the least Catholic club, it was the most religious one,” he continued. “Some other kids expressed interest in becoming Catholic, even though they were so strong in their denomination. We didn’t force religion or Catholicism on them, and they embraced them on their own. It was a wonderful thing.”



*Fr. Tom Brennan and Fr. Bill Ferruzzi, SDBs
Credit: Fr. Bill Ferruzzi, SDB*



*Fr. Bill (bottom left) at summer camp in Goshen, NY, in 1968
Credit: Fr. Bill Ferruzzi, SDB*

Fr. Bill also recalled an encounter he had with an eight-to-nine-year-old girl during his twenty-fifth anniversary of priesthood during his time in Columbus. “She asked me, ‘How long did you want to be a priest?’ After I answered her, she said, ‘You got what you wanted, didn’t you?’” Fr. Bill smiled. “She’s right—it wasn’t about me. We’re thanking God for the occasion, not me! Kids are honest, and she kept it real.”

Another memory that touched Fr. Bill was when he returned to East Boston in 2006. “I met kids whose family names I recognized and went, ‘Did your father go to school here?’ They’d return the next day and say, ‘My dad remembers you. You were his teacher!’ What an amazing statement! The classroom is where we really impact the kids and have the chance to shape their lives. School is where it’s at, and I’m happy I spent the majority of my time in schoolwork.”

As Fr. Bill looks back on sixty years of profession, he feels immensely grateful. “I look back and say, ‘God has been good to me, a lot better than I deserved,’” Fr. Bill beamed. “I’m grateful, first of all, to almighty God. It’s been a wonderful ride (or hike).”

15 Years Professed



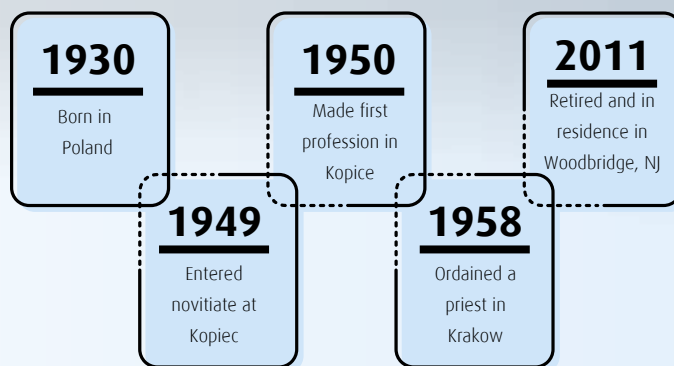
Fr. Jan Bernas, SDB
Credit: Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

Fr. Jan Bernas

By Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

Fr. Jan Bernas, SDB, this year celebrates 75 years of religious profession as a Salesian of Don Bosco. A native of Oswiecim, Poland, he made his novitiate at Kopiec, Poland, in 1949-1950 and professed vows there on August 16, 1950.

Jan was born on July 14, 1930. His father died just months later, and his mother in 1945. Poland had been devastated by World War II and the Nazi occupation. The Salesians at Oswiecim took in the teenaged orphan, who completed his education without fees. He decided that he wanted to become a Salesian and help other youngsters in need.



A member of the Wroclaw Province, Fr. Jan was ordained in Krakow in 1958. He did parish ministry, earned a master's degree in pastoral theology at the University of Lublin, and was director of the house in Poznan for five years (1976-1981).

At that time, Polish Salesians were going as missionaries to Zambia. Fr. Jan volunteered to go and went to London to learn English. By 1984 he was in Lusaka, Zambia, as director. Later he moved to Kabwe as an assistant pastor. He learned two of the local languages and worked to foster local vocations. He believes that his years in Zambia were the most fulfilling of his priesthood. He's proud that at least six of his boys have become priests, and one a brother. His vocational advice is to pray and to read the Bible.

In 1994 he returned to Poland for three years. In 1997 he came to the U.S. as chaplain to St. Joseph's Terrace, a Polish nursing home, in Woodbridge, N.J. He retired from that responsibility in 2011 but remains in residence there.

Fr. Jan wrote a memoir, *Powolanie z przeszkodami* ("Vocation with obstacles") in which he credits God for leading him in his vocation. He sees even his sufferings from poor health as signs of God's love for him. In spite of that alleged poor health, this year he turned ninety-five years old!

40 Years Professed

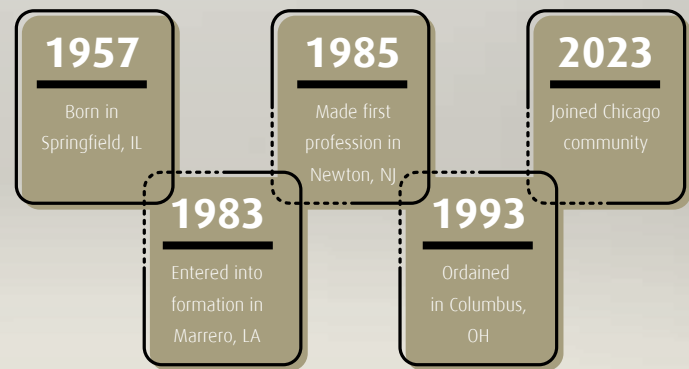


Fr. Jim Berning, SDB
Credit: Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

Fr. Jim Berning

By Fr. Paul Chu, SDB

Born in Springfield, IL, Jim Berning grew up in numerous states with his family in the Midwest and eventually settled in Wyoming with Yellowstone Park as their backyard. The Rocky Mountains offered rich experiences in hiking, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, skiing, snowmobiling, and even the thrill of skydiving! The attraction to serve youth occurred while Jim taught martial arts in a recreation center. After the sessions, the young people would often hang around and feel free to express what was going on in their lives.



Later as a young adult, Jim encountered another sort of “call to serve” when his pastor at St. Anthony’s gave a vocation homily about the prophet Jeremiah. In his concluding remarks, Fr. Brady asked: “Do any of the youth at St. Anthony’s feel called to serve like this youthful prophet?” This question would never go away from Jim’s thoughts, and he decided to discuss this with a parish priest at university to understand what was happening to him. The priest laughed and said, “Well Jim, as I see it, you have a vocation which comes from your frequenting Mass and making yourself available for parish and ministry functions.” At first, this seemed to be a revelation to Jim, but the discussion brought Jim to deepen his resolve to discern his vocation through a Bible study class and an outreach ministry at the Newman Center. Later at a vocation retreat sponsored by the Newman Center, Jim made a vocation plan to discern for two years after graduating from university.

Having earned a degree in geology, Jim was employed by Dow Chemical as a field engineering representative in the oil industry. There were numerous transfers, and each place allowed Jim to discern different vocation venues from diocesan and religious groups all the while enjoying working at Dow. While living in Ohio (OH), Fr. Dennis Donovan was assigned to Jim’s parish as a deacon. Jim was attracted to how Fr. Dennis connected the Gospel with life experiences in his homilies. Over brunch after a Sunday mass, Dennis laid out the Salesian charism and invited Jim to visit the Salesian Boys and Girls Club in Columbus, OH. After staying in touch with Fr. Dennis for over a year, Jim was referred to the province vocation director, Richard McCormick, who invited Jim to the northeast to visit summer camp apostolates. While these were worthwhile experiences, Jim was still uncommitted to any group, but following the terms of his vocation plan, Jim resigned from Dow and planned to enter St. Meinrad Seminary in Indiana as an independent. However, the Salesians offered him the opportunity to be in formation at an active apostolate and teach at Archbishop Shaw High School in Marrero, LA. This sealed his vocation to settle in with the Salesians.



Well Jim, as I see it, you have a vocation which comes from your frequenting Mass and making yourself available for parish and ministry functions.

After the experience at Archbishop Shaw, Jim continued his formation with profession at Don Bosco College in Newton, NJ; practical training at St. Dominic Savio High School in East Boston, MA; and theology in Columbus, OH. After ordination, Fr. Jim worked at various apostolates: Marrero, LA; Port Chester and Stony Point, NY; Orange and South Orange, NJ; Toronto, ON; Edmonton, AB. He is currently part of the St. John Bosco-St. James Parish community in Chicago, IL.



Fr. Jim appreciates the ongoing opportunity to help create a Salesian environment with a sense of belonging, family and camaraderie where young people can grow and mature in their relationship with God. His philosophy is to secure opportunities to stretch oneself, which has included for him: education in counseling and religious education; serving as an intern in the United Nations to bring experiences of economic and social justice to youths and young adults; making the *Norte Camino* pilgrimage in Spain; and caring for an aging parent. These experiences have engendered for Jim how to pursue life to the full.

*Fr. Jim with his family during pivotal moments of his Salesian life.
Credit: Fr. Jim Berning, SDB*

10 Years Professed

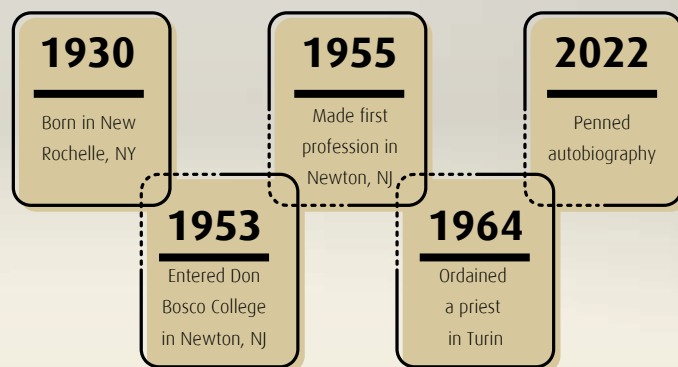


Fr. John Blanco, SDB
Credit: Salesian Youth Ministry

Fr. John Blanco

By Fr. Eric Wyckoff, SDB

Fr. John Blanco of our Ramsey community celebrates seventy years of Salesian life this year. He has also ascended to the position of a senior confrere in the SUE Province. Ever the quintessential gentleman, Fr. John has gracefully reached the age of 95 with the same friendly smile and pastoral dedication that has won the esteem of many over the years. At his recent birthday celebration, many grateful confreres, relatives, members of the Salesian Family, and friends gathered at Don Bosco Prep to wish him well and enjoy his company.



John Peter Blanco was born on January 30, 1930, and he grew up on Beechwood Avenue in New Rochelle, NY. His peaceful home life, with parents who educated their children without having to resort to punishments, already prepared him to practice Don Bosco's Preventive System. His years at Albert Leonard Vocational High School (now the New Rochelle City Hall) were also a positive experience. There he studied electronics, played third base on the varsity baseball team, and was elected president of the student body. The next step for teenage John was Manhattan College, where he was taught by the De La Salle Christian Brothers and played Division 1 baseball. The NCAA took notice of his prowess at third base and named him a 1952 All-American.

It was during his junior year at Manhattan College that this plucky third baseman picked up Fr. Paul Aronica's short biography of St. John Bosco, entitled "A Man Sent by God." The story of Don Bosco's life captivated him. A truly significant moment in his life came when he visited Salesian High School and was met by none other than the famous Fr. Eneas Tozzi, who took him to the chapel to pray a Hail Mary together. Young John was impressed with how this Salesian priest, an older man who had been a major superior and met Don Bosco personally, so kindly took time with him. There was an immediate connection, and after completing his bachelor's degree in 1953, off John went to Don Bosco College in Newton.

Fr. John made his first profession as a Salesian of Don Bosco on September 9, 1955, seventy years ago. After perpetual profession in 1960 and theological studies at the Crocetta in Turin, Fr. John was ordained to the priesthood on February 9, 1964, at the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin.



Today, Fr. John Blanco's sacramental ministry is a key part of the Salesian presence at Don Bosco Prep.

Over the years, Fr. John has served in many of the province's works, including eleven years at Archbishop Shaw High School in Marrero (1967-78), where he coached baseball and basketball and served two terms as director. He reflects that among his various pastoral experiences, his ten years at Corpus Christi Parish in Port Chester (1993-98, 2002-07) stand out as especially significant. He got to know many of the families in the parish quite well, and they stay in close touch to this day. Indeed, parishioners from Port Chester were prominent among the guests at his ninety-fifth birthday celebration. The blessings of those years in Port Chester also included a good friendship with Fr. Peter Granzotto. Fr. John and Fr. Peter not only shared an enthusiasm for baseball, but they would regularly hear each confession.

Today Fr. John Blanco's sacramental ministry is a key part of the Salesian presence at Don Bosco Prep. He celebrates Mass at the school, at local parishes, and in the community. Every single morning, rain or snow or shine, he makes his way to the Sacred Heart Chapel to be available for confessions. There are daily penitents, students and faculty alike, who take advantage of this opportunity to receive the sacrament from a kind and understanding priest. Those who wish to know more about his vocational journey can read his 2022 autobiography, entitled *The Story of My Life*.

Happy anniversary, Fr. John, and thank you for your happy, holy, and hardworking example!



Top photo: Fr. Abraham Feliciano, SDB; New York Giants quarterback and Don Bosco Prep alumnus (DBP '16) Tommy DeVito; and Fr. John Blanco, SDB
Credit: Fr. Abraham Feliciano
Bottom photo: Bro. John Taylor, Fr. John Blanco, Bro. Minhtu Nguyen, and Bro. Pascal Mukuye, SDBs
Credit: Salesian Youth Ministry

50 Years Ordained



Fr. Tom Gwozdz, SDB
Credit: Julia St. Clair

Fr. Tom Gwozdz

By Julia St. Clair

Fr. Tom Gwozdz grew up in Springfield, MA, where basketball was invented. “The kids decided to throw a ball into an apple basket and put the basket on the garage door,” he remarked. As the middle child of three children, Fr. Tom enjoyed his teenage years before he worked as a teller in a bank. “I realized it wouldn’t get me far,” he observed. “I went to school, learned marketing, and learned that wasn’t for me, either.”

1940

Born in
Springfield,
MA

1964

Made first
profession in
Newton, NJ

1996

Received a
PhD from
Fordham

1962

Entered Don
Bosco College
in Newton, NJ

1975

Ordained
a priest
in Rome

As Fr. Tom discerned where he was called to in life, he had a friend who was with the Salesians, who helped him discover that he always wanted to be a teacher, specifically for CCD. Fr. Tom joined his friend on a trip to Don Bosco College in Newton, NJ. “And that’s when I decided to join them,” he beamed. “The teaching aspect made me feel most connected [to the Salesians].”

While in formation, Fr. Tom taught religion at Don Bosco Prep in Ramsey, NJ. There, Fr. Salvatore Isgro (then guidance counselor of Don Bosco Prep and later provincial from 1973-1979) encouraged Fr. Tom to get a PhD in philosophy and teach at a university. “I always liked philosophy, even while studying as a cleric at Don Bosco College,” he exclaimed. “Fr. Frank Klauder helped spark my interest.”

Fr. Tom obtained his degree from Fordham University in the mid-to-late 1990s, yet was met with a shock. “I taught at Don Bosco College, and while I was there teaching, it closed down,” Fr. Tom revealed. “I left with a degree in philosophy and nowhere to use it.”

Happily, Fr. Tom would get to teach and use his degree at other assignments, such as at Saint Joseph Seminary College in Covington, LA, and the Pontifical College Josephinum (the Josephinum) in Columbus, OH, where students studied philosophy and theology, the latter of which was one of Fr. Tom’s favorite assignments.



Fr. Tom (second to the right) and his fellow newly ordained priests, Provincial Fr. Salvatore Isgro (second from the left) and the Rector Major Fr. Aloysius Ricceri (center), in 1975
Credit: Fr. Tom Gwozd, SDB

"I had a great time teaching with the Benedictines at the Josephinum," he began. "My favorite lesson to teach was metaphysics. I did my dissertation on the philosopher Jacques Maritain, a toniest who taught metaphysical thought, and titled it: 'Jacques Maritain and the centrality of intuition.'"

Fr. Tom explained the different ways that Maritain used the notion of intuition. "First, there's the intuition of being. We all have an intuition that things are real," he proclaimed. "Next, there's the intuition of the artist—the 'more interesting one.' [Maritain] claimed that what the artist paints in a work of art is not so much the object itself that he's painting but his own perception of it.

"For example, if you take the Cathedral of Rouen and get two artists to paint two different versions of it, you'll get two different paintings—two different perceptions, each of the intuition of the artists themselves."

Fr. Tom is celebrating his 50th anniversary of ordination. He was ordained in Rome by Pope St. Paul VI in 1975. "It feels awesome," he beamed. "How can you not feel that way when you were ordained by the pope, first of all, and then someone who became a saint? It was (and still is) a privilege."

During the 1975 Jubilee, Pope Paul VI wanted a mass ordination of people from around the world. "The provincial (Fr. Isgro) asked our class if we were willing and able to go and do that sort of thing," Fr. Tom recalled. "Of course, we said 'yes!'"



Fr. Tom spent a few weeks in Italy, where he was joined by his parents and an uncle. “One of the disadvantages of being ordained there was that my whole family couldn’t make it,” he pondered. “The big thing was the first Mass back at my parish.”

Today, Fr. Tom is the only one left of his ordination class. “I’m celebrating 50 years—ok, wonderful,” he laughed.

Fr. Tom’s fellow Salesians remain inspired by his journey and impact on them. Salesian Missions and New Rochelle director Fr. Mike Conway, SDB, was one of Fr. Tom’s students. “I was blessed to have Fr. Tom Gwozdz as one of my philosophy professors while attending Don Bosco College, and his classes were always most enjoyable,” Fr. Mike shared. “Although studying philosophy can be a bit ‘dull and boring’ for some (not me, of course!), Fr. Tom made it enjoyable with his wit and engaging commentary.”

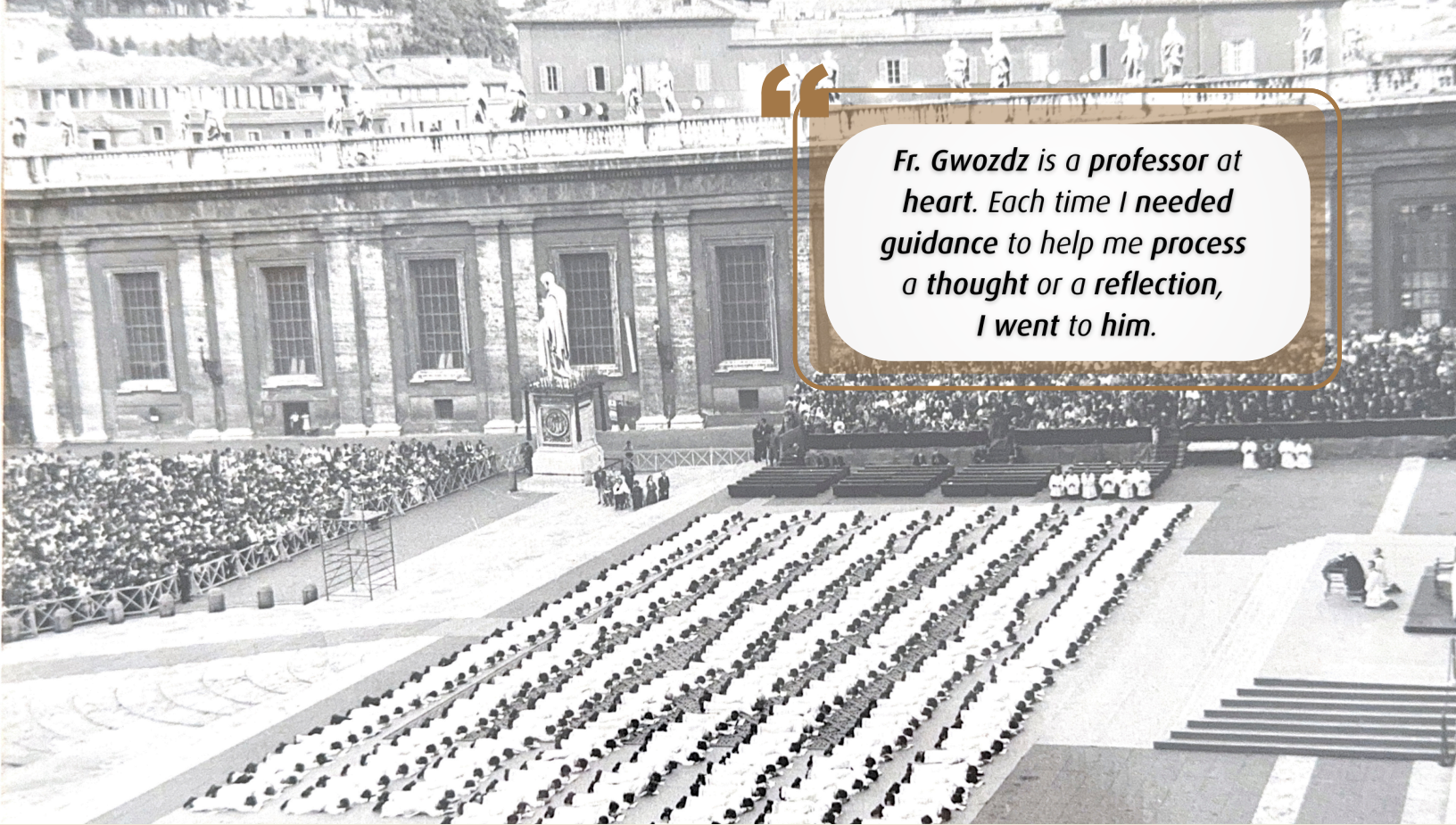
Fr. Mike reflected on how Fr. Tom was a true brother to him and his classmates. “Outside the classroom, he was ‘one of us’ in so many ways,” he remarked. “[Fr. Tom] enjoyed the company of his confreres and never hesitated to laugh and enjoy himself when the occasion arose. When it came to the liturgy, Fr. Tom was top-notch and ensured the liturgy was well prepared and celebrated. His homilies were well thought out, engaging, and challenging.”

“I first met Fr. Tom when he was a brother in practical training at Don Bosco Prep in 1967-69,” Fr. Jim McKenna, SDB, shared. “At that time, he was always filled with Vatican II, aka ‘the new spirit of the Church.’ Fr. Tom was always a thinker, a questioner, and was happy that God gave him a mind that absorbed philosophy, theology, and music.”

Fr. Jim lived with Fr. Tom in community several times: in the 1980s in Newton, NJ; late 90s in Columbus, OH; 2000s in Louisiana; during summer vacation this year in Tampa, FL.



*Top photo: Fr. Tom during his ordination to the diaconate in Columbus, OH
Bottom photo: Fr. Tom and his parents in St. Peter's Square.
Credit: Fr. Tom Gwozdz, SDB*



Fr. Gwozdz is a professor at heart. Each time I needed guidance to help me process a thought or a reflection, I went to him.



"Fr. Tom is truly a person who loves the Church," Fr. Jim continued. "His priesthood engages in a wide range of past, present, and future conversations and experiences. Fr. Tom, enjoy another milestone and your memories!"

Vice provincial Fr. Franco Pinto, SDB, who served as Fr. Tom's director for many years in Tampa, FL, looked back on fond memories with him. "Fr. Gwozdz is a professor at heart," Fr. Franco began. "Each time I needed guidance to help me process a thought or a reflection, I went to him. We would discuss the thought as much as we could. Then he would always—I mean always—come back and offer words of wisdom, words that would help me immensely. I was blessed to have lived with him."

To anyone who is discerning a call to Salesian religious life, Fr. Tom offers the following advice: "First, find out if this is really your call, and, when you find that it is, go for it," he professed. "And be confident that life will develop with many wonderful occasions and many challenges."

*Top photo: Ordinands lie prostrate in St. Peter's Square.
Side photo: Fr. Tom (third from the left) and his fellow ordinands line up in St. Peter's Square.
Credit: Fr. Tom Gwozdz, SDB*

10 Years Professed



Fr. George Hanna, SDB
Credit: Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

Fr. George Hanna

by Fr. Ky Nguyen, SDB, with the assistance of A.I.

The year 2025 marks a remarkable milestone for Fr. George Hanna, SDB, who celebrates 70 years of religious profession as a Salesian of Don Bosco. His journey, deeply rooted in faith, perseverance, and love for the young, has been a testament to the spirit of Don Bosco—to bring joy, education, and Christ’s presence to those he serves.

A Life of Dedication

Born on November 19, 1933, in Pawtucket, RI, Fr. Hanna grew up in humble circumstances. Raised by his hardworking mother, who single-handedly supported him and his brother, he learned the value of sacrifice and perseverance from a young age. “We were very poor, so I worked at a very young age selling fruits and vegetables to help out,” he recalled. Despite financial struggles, his mother ensured he received a Catholic education, planting the seeds of faith that would later blossom into his religious vocation.

1933

Born on
November 19
in Rhode Island

1955

Made first
profession in
Newton, NJ

1966

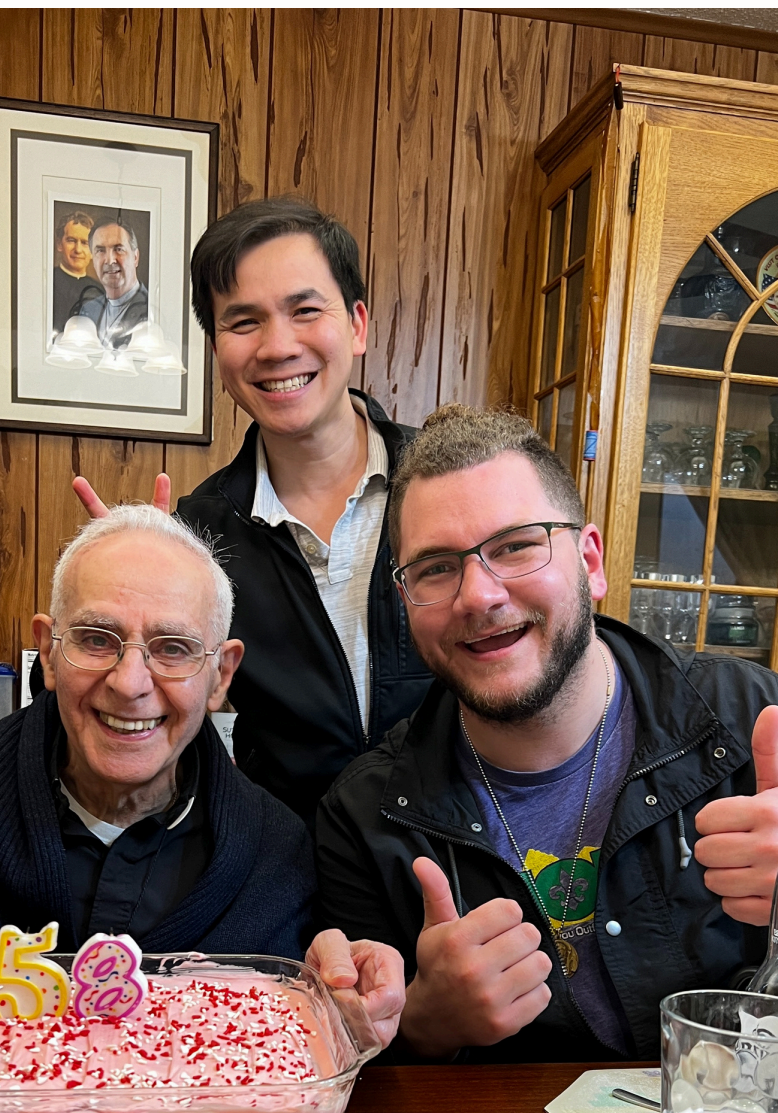
Ordained
a priest in
Rome

2014

Assigned to
Marrero, where
he is today

Feeling called to the Salesians of Don Bosco, he professed his first vows on September 8, 1955, in Newton, NJ. His early formation included three years of post-novitiate in Newton, NJ, followed by one year of practical training in Stony Point, NY. He was then sent to Beirut, Lebanon, for three additional years of practical training before traveling to Rome to study theology. He was ordained a priest in Rome in 1966.

For the past seven decades, Fr. Hanna has served primarily in parishes, taking on roles as pastor, parochial vicar, and community director in various locations, including Paterson, NJ; Port Chester, NY; Elizabeth, NJ; Harlem, NY; Orange, NJ; Washington, DC, and Marrero, LA. His ministry has been shaped by challenges, moments of deep joy, and an unwavering commitment to the Salesian charism.



Fr. Ky Nguyen (standing) and Bro. Regan Ledet (right) celebrate Fr. George's 58th anniversary of ordination, 2024
Credit: Bro. Kevin White, SDB



[Fr. Hanna] embodies the Salesian spirit through his encouragement, wisdom, and joy.

In July 2014, Fr. George was assigned to Marrero, LA, where he continues to serve as a parochial vicar and, in the words of many parishioners, a grandfather figure to countless young people. His presence extends beyond the parish, as he has become a fixture in the lives of students at Archbishop Shaw High School, where he embodies the Salesian spirit through his encouragement, wisdom, and joy.

Embracing Challenges with Faith

Throughout his ministry, Fr. Hanna has faced numerous challenges, each shaping his understanding of priesthood and service. One of the most difficult experiences was a devastating fire in Port Chester, NY, which left Holy Rosary Parish without a church for nearly three years. The rebuilding process was arduous, yet it strengthened the faith of the community.

Another challenge came with navigating changing parish demographics. Many of the parishes he served initially had Italian-American congregations, but over time, the number of Spanish-speaking parishioners increased. Fr. Hanna embraced the change, recognizing that “[everyone] is worthy of help and deserves all you can do for them.”

At the end of the second millennium, Fr. Hanna was assigned to Harlem, NY, to work with a largely Haitian community. To better understand and connect with the people he served, he studied African American, Haitian, and Caribbean cultures and authors. “It was my way of saying, ‘I value you. I want to know about you, even though I don’t come from your culture,’” he said. Fr. Hanna also established a community outreach program and partnered with a nearby program for recovering drug addicts, some of whom possessed incredible skills that they used to repair and improve church buildings. For them, this was not just labor—it was part of their healing process.

Despite societal changes and growing skepticism toward the priesthood, Fr. Hanna has remained steadfast. “When I entered the seminary, priests were far more respected. Today, there are constant jokes, newspaper articles, and public attacks,” he explained. “We have to deal with perception, and that’s a huge challenge.” However, he firmly believes that the best response is to remain faithful to the calling and continue serving with love and humility.



*Fr. Abraham Feliciano and Fr. George Hanna, SDBs
Credit: Andrea Zimmerman, Salesian Family SDB Delegate, Salesian Cooperator*

Joy in Serving the Young

One of Fr. Hanna's most vivid experiences comes from his time in Paterson, NJ, where he founded a summer camp for children. At first, the older siblings were hesitant to participate, but their younger brothers and sisters eagerly joined. To make it engaging, he organized fun activities—a haunted house, free lunches, treats, a neighborhood pool, and even trips to Six Flags Great Adventure. Soon, over 100 children attended every day, many from rough backgrounds.

"There were parishioners who were skeptical at first," he admitted. "But, in time, their view of priests changed. They saw that I wasn't just a priest—I was someone who cared for their children and wanted the best for them."

These experiences affirmed his deep conviction that Don Bosco's principles—joy, presence, and commitment to young people—are timeless and effective.

Gratitude for the Salesian Charism

As he reflected on his 70 years as a Salesian, Fr. Hanna expressed profound gratitude for the vocation that shaped his life. "I was very fortunate to have discovered the Salesian Family of Don Bosco," he exclaimed. "The family spirit, the emphasis on education, and the commitment to forming young people in Christian values have met my highest expectations and personal needs."



Advice for the Next Generation

As Fr. Hanna looks toward the future, he has some words of wisdom for young people discerning their vocation:

- 1.) **Stay rooted in prayer and community.** “Even with a strong spiritual practice, it’s easy to lose sight of your calling when you’re caught up in work. Stay connected to God and to those who support you.”
- 2.) **Embrace cultural diversity.** “We live in a world of many cultures and backgrounds. Don’t be afraid to learn about others, respect their traditions, and engage with an open heart. It’s not about changing who you are but about valuing who they are.”
- 3.) **Find joy in service.** “The world needs people who are willing to serve with love, patience, and perseverance. Look for the best in others, and you will find Christ in them.”
- 4.) **Create the future you hope for.** He quoted Abraham Lincoln and reminded young people: “The only way to predict the future is to create it.”



Looking Ahead with Joy

After 70 years of religious life, Fr. George Hanna continues to serve with the same passion and love that first led him to the Salesians. Whether in a parish, a school, or simply walking alongside those in need, he remains a true father, mentor, and friend to all who encounter him.

As he celebrates this milestone, Fr. Hanna is not looking back with nostalgia but forward with joy and hope. His journey is a reminder that faithfulness to one’s vocation brings immense fulfillment and that, even after seven decades, there is always more work to be done, more lives to touch, and more love to give.

And so, Fr. George Hanna continues — joyful, dedicated, and ever faithful to Don Bosco’s call: *“Da mihi animas, caetera tolle”* — “Give me souls, take away the rest.”

Top photo: Fr. George Hanna with a statue of Mary Help of Christians
Bottom photo: Fr. George Hanna in the wintertime
Credit: Andrea Zimmerman, Salesian Family SDB Delegate, Salesian Cooperator

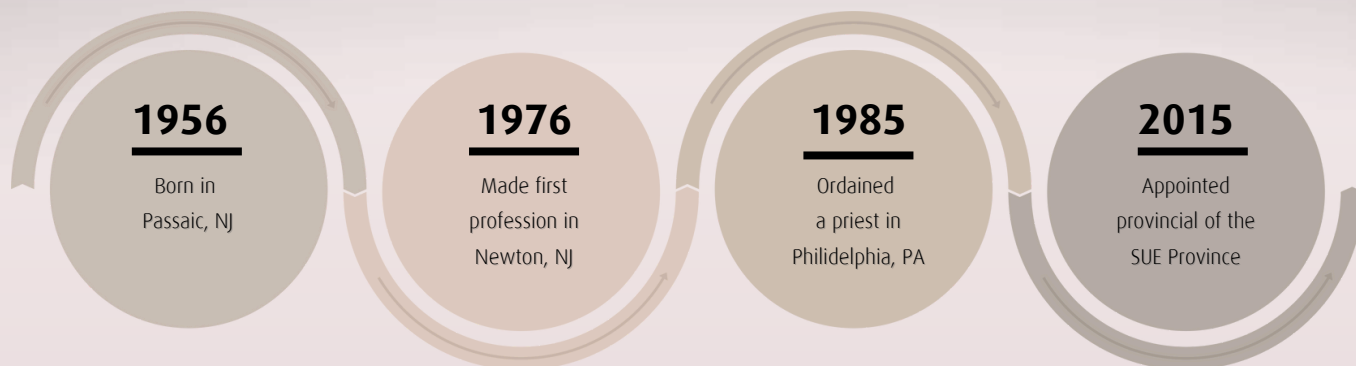


Fr. Steve Shafran, SDB
Credit: Tony Powell

Fr. Steve Shafran

By Fr. Tim Ploch, SDB

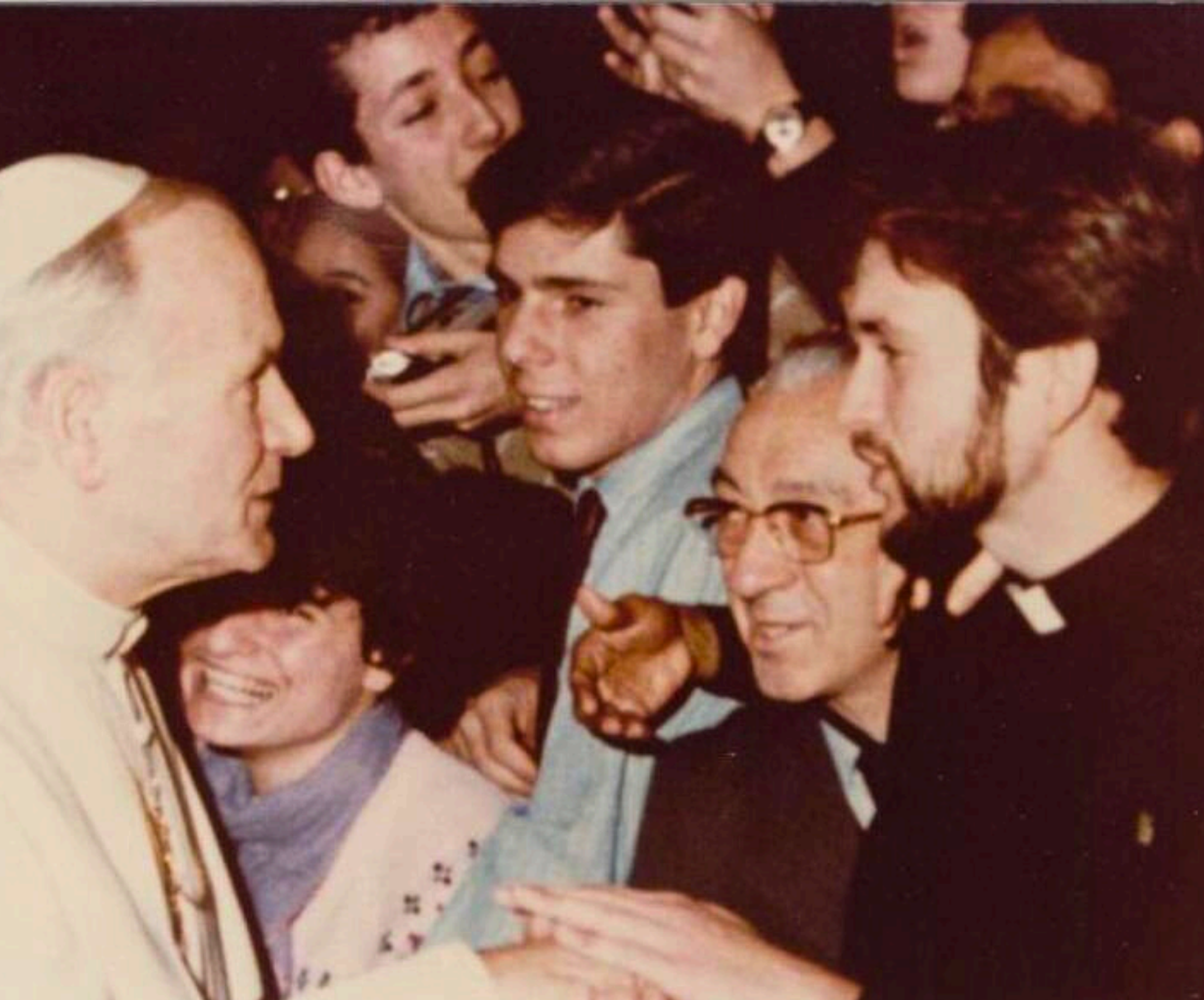
Steve Shafran is truly one of Don Bosco's boys, deciding to "stay with him" after graduating from Don Bosco Prep, Ramsey, class of 1974. Steve credits many Ramsey Salesians for inspiring him in his vocational journey during his high school years: Fr. Alphonse DiCairano, Fr. Floyd Rotunno, and Fr. Joe LaForge, who was especially influential in helping him develop his talent and love for the stage. Then came a fork in the road. Which road will I follow? Don Bosco as a Salesian? Or the road that will grow my talent and love for the stage? So right after graduating from the Prep, Steve traveled to California with the express intention of deciding whether he would give his life to the altar or to the stage, both very strong pulls, both very inviting roads. Today we're celebrating that the altar won out! Of course the stage would never be far from the heart of this son of Don Bosco.



He went on to Newton, and there completed the first phases of his Salesian and priestly formation. He fell in love with the story of Don Bosco's own love for music and theater and was guided and inspired by the likes of Fr. Ted Ciampi (Steve was among his last batch of novices), Fr. David DeBurgh, and, of course, Fr. Vince Zuliani. Steve also mentioned Fr. John Drozda, who showed him how to be a Salesian of two rites.

For practical training Steve cut his teeth as a Salesian educator, evangelizer and theater master at St. Dominic Savio High School, East Boston, MA. There he was inspired in all dimensions of his vocational and personal talents by Fr. Don Zarkoski, Fr. Earl Bissonnette, and two unforgettable coadjutor brothers, Tony Ambrogio and Ben Natoli.

After these very intense and fruitful years of practical training, Steve was asked to go to Rome to prepare for his ordination, to study at the UPS, and forge strong connections with the Salesian Ukrainians who lived and worked there. However, the fragile health situation of his father brought him back to the States after three years. Back home, he completed his initial formation at the Pontifical College Josephinum and the Salesian Center in Columbus, OH. It was on May 5, 1985, that Steve was ordained a Salesian priest in the Ukrainian Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Philadelphia, PA, forty years ago!



Then-Bro. Steve meets St. Pope John Paul II on December 30, 1981.

Credit: Fr. Steve Shafran, SDB

Steve's journey as a Salesian priest he himself describes as "a great trajectory." Right after ordination, he was a member of the Salesian High School teaching faculty in New Rochelle. Then he began a period of work in the vocation office, both up north in Stony Point and down south in Marrero and New Orleans. Steve served for three years as principal of Archbishop Shaw High School, after which he went to the University of San Francisco to earn his doctorate in education. For the next ten years, he served consecutively as director in Columbus at the Salesian Center and in Ramsey at Don Bosco Prep, his alma mater, where he later returned as chief development officer, serving simultaneously for nine years as provincial councilor.

For the next nine years, Steve forged a new path for our province, pioneering a Salesian collaboration with the national Cristo Rey Network of schools. Steve became president of our first such partnership, Don Bosco Cristo Rey High School in the Archdiocese of Washington, DC. Rector Major Fr. Ángel Fernández saw a good leader and appointed Steve provincial of the Province of St. Philip the Apostle. He served in that capacity from 2015-2017.



***[Fr.] Steve recognizes
the hands of God
and Mary in it all.***

All that rises must also fall. Steve makes no secret that things turned around for him dramatically when he went through a most traumatic experience precisely during his time as provincial, a physical, spiritual, and psychological trauma that buckled him, almost taking his life. But instead, not without deep pain at every level and great anxiety, he came out of it through the loving care of the Good Shepherd and Our Lady of Lourdes. They accompanied him to healing and to new life, to new purpose and meaning. He had been going onward and upward, under more and more pressure. But then suddenly his trajectory started heading down. Steve recognizes the hands of God and Mary in it all. Now, instead, he leans inward. In his recuperation from the physical, emotional, and spiritual wounds he bore, he himself says that he had to learn to depend on everybody for everything, a complete reversal of who and what he was before. He saw it all as an invitation from the Lord to go deeper, *Duc in Altum*, to live his vocation as a wounded shepherd following the Good Shepherd who laid down his life, in the footsteps of Don Bosco.

Now Steve is once again busy at our mission. He sees his Salesian work at the Marian Shrine and now in Tampa as a gift from the Lord, allowing him to be and do what he was ordained for, accompanying and serving others, especially young adults who may be facing trauma. Not as a stage actor, but as a priest of Christ and son of Don Bosco.

Fr. Steve, may God and our mother Mary Help of Christians, keep you happy, healthy and fulfilled as a Salesian priest for many years to come!



Top photo: Fr. Steve during his diaconate ordination

Credit: Fr. Steve Shafran, SDB

Bottom photo: Fr. Steve with Don Bosco Cristo Rey High School students

Credit: Catholic Standard

40 Years Ordained



Fr. Jim Mulloy, SDB
Credit: Fr. Abraham Feliciano, SDB

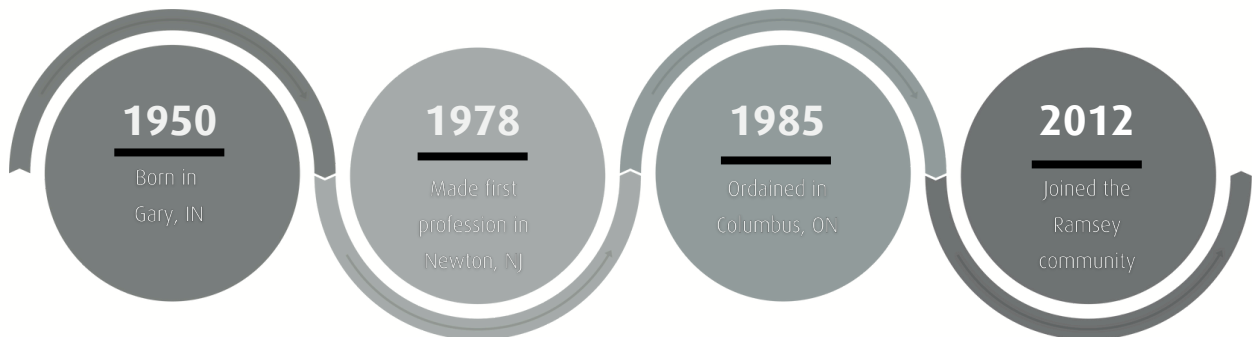
Fr. Jim Mulloy

By Fr. Eric Wyckoff, SDB

Fr. Jim Mulloy of the Ramsey community celebrates forty years of priesthood this year. Born on November 27, 1950, he made his first profession as a Salesian on September 1, 1978, and was ordained to the priesthood on May 18, 1985.

Before entering Salesian life, he obtained a degree in engineering and taught in public high schools in Indianapolis. Much of his Salesian life has been in schools, teaching theology as well as technical subjects such as drafting. This includes years of service at Mary Help of Christians School in Tampa, Salesian High in New Rochelle, ten years at Don Bosco Tech, Boston (1985-91, 1994-98) and the past thirteen years at Don Bosco Prep, Ramsey (2012-25).

He has been a faithful chaplain to the Salesian Sisters, including sixteen years of service at the summer camp in North Haledon, and he was given the honor of being the first to unlock the newly reconstructed chapel at Mary Help of Christians Academy in 2022. Fr. Jim is also known as an avid outdoorsman, participating in many Boy Scout retreats over the years and numerous camping outings.



As he reflected on significant moments in his Salesian life, Fr. Jim wrote, "Anything started well is a blessed thing. Starting my Son of Mary year in Tampa under the directorship of Fr. Gus Kita and a newly-ordained Fr. Pat Angelucci made for a wonderful introduction into Salesian life. Fr. Pat protected us by making sure that our classes in Salesian formation were not neglected. He had great zeal for the work in Tampa and for our formation. I also remember Fr. Joseph Kormann, who was a real inspiration to me in many ways. When I was a brother in practical training, I remember Fr. Kormann taking care of the orange groves and giving soft-serve ice cream to the boys after school. What really impressed me was when I came back as a priest, and Tampa's future as a boarding school was in doubt. I remember he told me that he thought it was time to change, and that a new vision was needed for Tampa. He was capable of envisioning the future and letting go of everything that he was comfortable with."



*Fr. Jim and the late Fr. Tom Provenzano, SDB
Credit: Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB*

Numerous young people expressed their gratitude to Fr. Jim. He remembered: “When I did my practical training in Tampa, one of the boys was taking a woodshop class. On a scroll saw, he made a beautiful loon, which I have in my room today. He really put a lot of time and effort into it. I see it on my dresser every day, and I say a little prayer for him. In Boston, I helped out a lot with the Boy Scouts, and they were always very appreciative of me saying Masses for them and doing retreats and just camping out overnight. From time-to-time, they would always made a point of a letter card or some small gift.”

When asked about his best memory of an interaction with a young person, Fr. Jim recalled his days as a student of theology. “When I was in Columbus, I was assigned to pastoral work at St. Aloysius Parish,” he began. “People would call in for different needs, and we would visit their homes and do what we could for them. I remember one family that I used to help, and I basically kept going back to them, even when the ministry was supposed to end. They became very good friends over the years. One of the boys in the family I encouraged to make it through high school, and I was able to help him get his paperwork in for college.”

Today, Fr. Jim is a mainstay of the theology department at Don Bosco Prep, where he teaches a full schedule of classes every day to the eleventh graders. He continues to be a faithful and diligent chaplain to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in North Haledon, NJ, sometimes arriving in the chapel even before the sisters themselves. In community, he is a great cook and a constant catalyst for community activities. We wish “Jimmy James,” as the confreres sometimes call him, many more years of joy and fidelity!



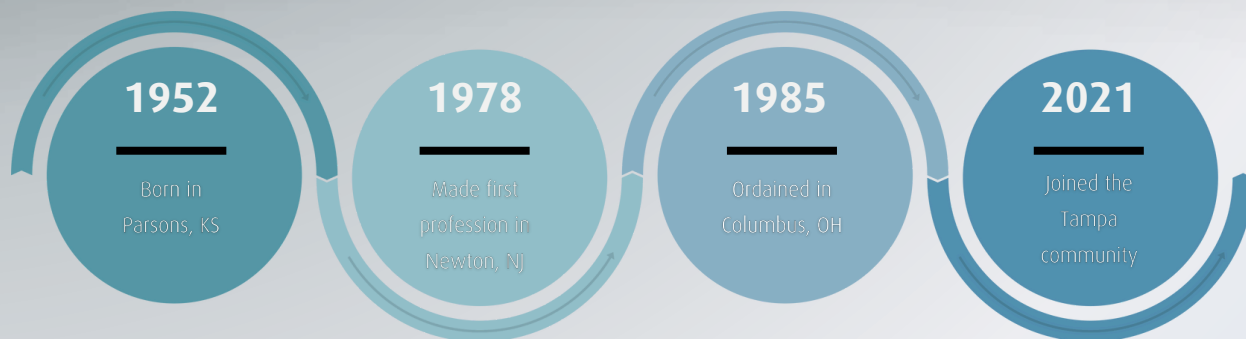
Fr. Rich Crager, SDB
Credit: Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

Fr. Richard Crager

By Fr. Eduardo Chincha, SDB

Richard Crager was born January 8, 1952, to Ben and Margie Crager at Mercy Catholic Hospital in Parsons, KS. Fr. Crager had three “baptisms”—in utero, at birth, and a formal baptism at St. Patrick’s Church in Parsons, KS. Having been born over two months early, Richard was not expected to live at birth.

On May 18, 1955, Richard was electrocuted while trying to fix a lamp. Unconscious and not breathing, he was scooped up by his mother, who ran with him outside into the yard and called for help. The next-door neighbor, Russell Drum, who reported in sick for work that day in order to finish his outside porch, heard the cries and came to help. In 1955, the only people who knew CPR at the time were electric or gas company workers. Russell worked for the gas company and administered CPR on Richard. He revived him and gave him back to his mother.



The oldest of nine children, Richard was taught to read early on the laps of his parents. At five years of age, he received an award from the public library for reading fifty books during the summer of 1957. He continues to read heavily to this day.

In 1959, the Cragers moved to St. Paul, KS, where Richard attended St. Paul Grade School through the eighth grade. In fall 1966, he attended Mother of Good Counsel Passionist Seminary in Warrenton, MO, for three years until it closed in May 1969. Richard graduated from St. Paul High School in spring 1970. From fall 1970 through spring 1975, Richard attended and graduated from Kansas State College of Pittsburg in Pittsburg, KS, with a degree in education.

After college, Richard worked for Swift Meat Company in Kansas City, KS, for a little over a year. In fall 1976, he was a Son of Mary in Tampa, FL, under the watchful eye of Fr. Patrick Angelucci. The following year, he attended novitiate in Newton, NJ. He made his first profession during the reign of Pope John Paul I on September 1, 1978. After novitiate, he attended Don Bosco College for a year, getting his B.A. After Newton, he was assigned to Don Bosco Prep in Ramsey as a P.E. instructor for two years.



[Fr. Crager was] ordained a priest on May 18, 1985 — exactly thirty years to the day of his electrocution and revival.

After two years in Ramsey, he attended the Josephinum in Columbus, OH, before being ordained a priest on May 18, 1985—thirty years to the day of his electrocution and revival.

Following his ordination, Fr. Richard was assigned to Goshen, NY, as principal until it closed down in January 1986. He then went on to Marrero in January 1986 before he was sent to Don Bosco Tech in Boston, MA, in August 1986. He spent three years there, then served at the Salesian Boys and Girls Club in Columbus, OH, for seven years as its director.

“The Club was one of my favorite assignments because of the great staff we had there,” Fr. Richard shared.

After Columbus, he was assigned to Stony Point as administrator for two years. From there, he went on to East Boston, MA, where he served as the executive director of the Salesian Boys and Girls Club for eight years. After East Boston, he was assigned to Elizabeth, NJ, for two years as a parish assistant and youth coordinator. Next, he returned to Stony Point to work in the bookstore for two years. After Stony Point, he was assigned for four years to the Mary Help of Christians Center in Tampa, FL, and then spent four years as an administrator in New Rochelle, NY. Following his term in New Rochelle, Fr. Richard was sent to Tampa again, this time as an administrator, where he is today.



Top photo: Fr. Crager takes a selfie.

Credit: Fr. Richard Crager, SDB

Bottom photo: Fr. Crager in 2017

Credit: Mary Help of Christians Center



Fr. Crager (seated, right), along with Salesian Family who traveled to Italy for the canonization of St. Artemdes Zatti in October 2022

Credit: Fr. Dominic Tran, SDB

Some of the happiest times of Fr. Richard's Salesian life were when he was the director of the Salesian Boys and Girls Clubs in Columbus and East Boston. "I spent fifteen years working the Clubs, and I loved the ability to do administrative work in the morning and be present with the youth in the afternoon and evening," he reminisced. "It was nice to be able to go after grants and donations to improve the Clubs and offer the youth a good and safe space to stay after school and in summer camp."

He especially remembers the youths he served at the Club in Columbus, OH. "Those were some of the neediest kids I've worked with, and I felt graced to do so," Fr. Richard shared. "Feeding 200 youth a day in our kitchen with full meals was a St. Joseph project that brought great joy to me. On Saturdays we often picked up thirty to forty dozen doughnuts and sweet rolls from Thurn's Bakery in German Village. Everyone could eat all the doughnuts they wanted, so long as they took one at a time."

Fr. Richard would like everyone to know that he's enjoyed every obedience he's been given. "And I thank Mary Help of Christians for that grace," he remarked.



Bro. Charlie Mayer, SDB
Credit: Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

Bro. Charlie Mayer

By Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

Bro. Charles Frederick Mayer, SDB, surrendered his soul to his Maker at 6:10 p.m. on Wednesday, February 12, 2025. He died at United Hebrew Nursing Home in New Rochelle, where he had been cared for since September 14, 2016. For several days he had been having some trouble breathing and was being treated for comfort. Fr. Jim Heuser anointed him on Sunday the 9th. The province had anticipated celebrating Bro. Charles's 50th anniversary of religious profession on September 1 of this year.

Charlie was born in Evansville, Ind., on October 14, 1942, and was baptized four days later at St. Benedict's Church in that city. He was also confirmed at St. Benedict's in 1949. His parents were Carl and Caroline Gumbel Mayer.

After graduation from Reitz Memorial High School in Evansville in 1960, he earned a B.S. in chemistry at St. Edward's University in Austin, Tex., in 1964. In the summer of 1963, he interned at Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies in Oak Ridge, Tenn. Continuing his studies, he earned a doctorate in chemistry from Indiana University in Bloomington, Ind., in 1969 with a GPA OF 3.93.

During the period between 1969 and 1973, Charlie may have been teaching chemistry; we don't have any information about this period. In any case, by 1973 he was discerning a possible vocation as a brother. Thus he came to Don Bosco College in Newton, N.J., as a Son of Mary in September 1973 and immediately began teaching sciences, fondly called Doc Mayer by his seminarian students. He entered the novitiate on August 31, 1974, and during that year not only continued teaching but also took credited DBC courses in theology and education. His novice master was Fr. Ted Ciampi, and among his 20 companions were Mike Baptista, Bert Cooper, Mike Farnham, Dave Gonder, Jim Heuser, Fr. Tony Mastroeni, and Vince Paczkowski. They (and a few others) professed on September 1, 1975. Bro. Charlie made perpetual vows on August 29, 1981.

Bro. Charlie continued teaching at DBC until 1981: biology, chemistry, and physics. He took supplementary summer courses at William Paterson College in 1977. He was part of the staff of the Boys Club attached to the college until he was appointed assistant to the novices in 1980-1981. The boys loved talking with him, says Fr. Eric Wyckoff.



Sons of Mary 1974

Credit: Salesian Provincial Archives

Fr. John Nazzaro was one of his students in 1973-1974, a “cleric” at the time, and he remembers: “Charlie was our chemistry teacher when he was a Son of Mary in Newton. Believe me when I tell you it was not the most lively class, but we had so much fun and great laughs. Charlie was always a gentleman and a gentle soul. He really cared if we learned about Guy Lousac’s gas laws. All of us are happy he’s at peace with the Lord.”

Former Salesian Bob Ferrara recalls Bro. Charlie as “a humble, meek person in an admirable way, very likeable and friendly. He was very easy to talk to, never an attitude.”

Bro. Charlie was assigned to Mary Help of Christians School in Tampa in 1981, where the students liked him but were a little hard for him to handle in class, according to a confrere who was there. In 1982 he came to the provincial house in New Rochelle to assist the province treasurer. In his 16 years in the provincial house community, he was ever attentive to his financial work. In the afternoon he would recreate by doing groundskeeping. Always a friendly presence to confreres and visitors, he was also a notable contributor to Christmas tree decorating.

In 1998 Bro. Charlie was re-assigned to the Salesian Boys & Girls Club in East Boston as community treasurer and an assistant in the Club. In 2004 he moved to St. Anthony’s Parish in Elizabeth, N.J., to help the community and apostolate in various ways.

From 2007 to 2016, Bro. Charlie served at the Marian Shrine in Haverstraw-Stony Point, N.Y., as manager of the bookstore/gift shop. Ann Cennamo, retreat house coordinator there, writes, “I will always remember Bro. Charlie as a sweet, kind soul.” Fr. Franco Pinto commented on the consistency of his daily routine and his good running of the bookstore. He noted that many people visited the store, not so much to buy something, as to talk with Brother, who had a very pastoral way of relating to them.

Deteriorating health compelled Bro. Charlie’s move from the Marian Shrine on September 14, 2016, to United Hebrew, where he was well cared for and was visited regularly by his confreres of the provincial house community. From India, Fr. Thomas Pallithanam, a former member of the New Rochelle community, wrote: “The community here offered our Eucharist for the repose of the soul of Bro. Charles Mayer. I told them how the New Rochelle community members would take turns to visit Bro. Charles daily even when he would hardly recognize their presence by his side.”



*Bros. Jerry Cincotta, John Zito, Bruno Busatto, Jim Wiegand, and Charlie Mayer, in 2005
Credit: Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB*

Upon learning of Bro. Charlie's passing, Bro. Hubert Twagirayezu, another former provincial house member now serving in Uganda, exclaimed, "Oh my goodness, my best friend. May God grant him eternal rest!"

Bro. Charlie is survived by a sister, Kathleen Wilcox, and a brother, Stephen. Both live in Indiana.

Bro. Charlie's funeral was celebrated at Salesian High School in New Rochelle on Friday, February 14. The students had an opportunity to pray after his body was brought to the chapel, and Salesians from the Haverstraw, Ramsey, and Orange communities paid their respects later. Fr. Franco Pinto, vice provincial, presided and preached at the Mass of Christian Burial.

On February 15 Bro. Charlie's remains were brought to the Salesian Cemetery in Goshen, N.Y., for burial.



A Final Note

Don Bosco deep in thought

Credit: www.sdb.org

To answer the question, *“How are religious to be prophetic?”*

Pope Francis said, *“With the eloquence of your lives, lives which radiate the joy and beauty of living the Gospel and following Christ to the full.”*

It is right that we celebrate the remarkable journeys of these men, journeys marked by unwavering faith, boundless dedication, and steadfast service to the Lord. These men responded to the call to serve young people, especially those on the margins of society, in the spirit of St. John Bosco, our founder.



Today, as we reflect on these Salesians’ jubilees, we acknowledge the profound impact of their commitment to their vows. Whether they have served for 40, 50, 60, 75 or even 80 years, these Salesians have exemplified the heart of the Gospel. Through their daily lives of prayer, sacrifice, and hard work, they have made God’s love tangible in communities around the country. They have served in schools, youth centers, parishes, and missions—each act a testament to their vow of service to Christ and His Church.

Through their missionary zeal, these men have responded to the cry of the poor and the marginalized, bringing the light of Christ to those most in need. Their work is a testament to the enduring power of the Gospel to transform lives, foster hope, and cultivate holiness.

I’d like to make a special mention on late Bro. Mike Brinkman. He would have been professed 65 years this year. Fr. Steve Ryan writes, “Mike Brinkman could fix just about anything. As a boy, Mike had the gift of repairing. When the washing machine broke his mom would not call on the Maytag man. She would just shout out ‘Michael, fix it!’ and he would. After high school, Mike joined the military. He served in the Air Force. There, his mechanical abilities were put to good use.

He also learned more about engineering and was the recipient of several commendations for his work. When he left the military in the mid-1950s and went to work, he could easily have made a career in several fields, but there was always a longing to give himself to God. This desire to give his life to Jesus was strong. It wouldn’t go away so he thought maybe religious life was for him. Then he found the Salesians and decided to give his life to God as a coadjutor brother in the education and evangelization of the young. Bro. Mike’s contributions to our Salesian Family in this province are numerous. For his 65 years of Salesian life, Don Bosco must be very proud. I hope that Bro. Mike’s story might inspire a vocation to the Salesian brotherhood.”

As we commemorate these jubilees, we not only celebrate the past but also call upon future generations to continue the Salesian mission. The world today faces challenges and uncertainties. Yet the Salesian spirit—rooted in hope and joy—remains as relevant as ever. The young men and women who follow in the footsteps of St. John Bosco are called to be signs and bearers of God’s love for the young.

On this jubilant occasion, we offer our prayers of thanksgiving for the gifts that the Salesians have shared with the world. We pray for all the members of the Salesian Family—priests, brothers, sisters, and lay associates—that they may continue to be faithful to their calling, and may the Lord bless them with strength, joy, and perseverance in their mission.

Let this celebration not just be a look back at the past but also a source of inspiration for the future—an invitation to carry forward the flame of St. John Bosco and to continue serving the Lord with the same fervor, faith, and joy that have defined the Salesian vocation for over a century.

May the Salesian spirit continue to guide and inspire, today and always.

Fr. Franco Pinto, SDB
Vice-Provincial

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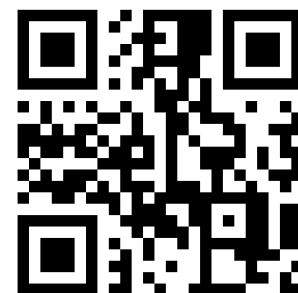
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