

Canada and Eastern USA



Salesian Family Snippets



News of the Salesian Family Near and Far





In This Issue



MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

IMPORTANT DATES

Educating Beyond Weaknesses 03

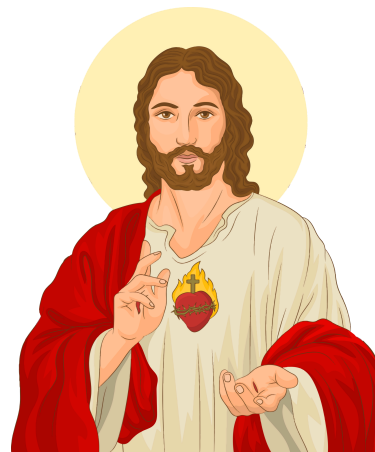
IN THE SALESIAN FAMILY KNOW

Discover the Salesian Family Groups 05
Be Inspired. Be Informed. Be Moved to Serve

The Don Bosco Volunteers 06
Volunteers of Don Bosco

JUBILEE 2025 YEAR OF HOPE

Blessings Received Filled with Joy 08
Growing in Holiness



June 8: Bl. Stephan Sándor, SDB

June 12: Bl. Francis Kesy and four companions

June 23: St. Joseph Cafasso



Have an article you'd like featured in *Salesian Family Snippets*? Send it to us!

andreazimm36@gmail.com
communications@salesians.org

Copyright © 2025 Salesian Family of Canada and Eastern USA. All rights reserved.

Front cover credit: Ms. Julia St. Clair | Back cover and photos used on "In This Issue" credit: Mrs. Andrea Zimmerman



*Fresco of Jesus giving the keys to St. Peter
Credit: Canva Pro*

Educating Beyond Weaknesses

Jesus' encounter with Peter illuminates and depicts with a particular light our mission as evangelizers and educators

MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR FR. FABIO ATTARD, SDB

In the last chapter of the Gospel of John, chapter 21, we find Jesus' encounter with Peter. We read a dialogue that is built on three questions and then ends with a mandate (John 21:15-23). I would like to comment on this encounter which casts a particular light on our very mission as evangelizers and educators. It is a passage that presents a fundamental moment in Peter's life and also in the mission of the nascent Church. For us who are engaged in the Salesian mission, it is also rich in educational and pastoral meaning.

After the resurrection, Jesus appears to the disciples on the Sea of Galilee and, after sharing a meal with them, turns to Simon Peter with three successive questions which touch directly on His relationship with Peter: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" In the first two questions, what Jesus asks for is a demanding love that does not count the cost. This question, asked twice to Peter, is demanding and challenging. Peter is aware of his weakness caused by his betrayal. For this reason, his answer both times is, indeed, one that testifies to love, but to a love that is more human, that is fragile. In the face of these two answers, Jesus still entrusts him with the care of His flock.

It is the third question that puts Peter in crisis because Jesus asks Peter precisely for the commitment to that love of which he is capable: human love with its weaknesses, fragility, and limitations. We can say that Jesus calls Peter to a "high" love, but he does not want to put him in a situation of impossibility, of being discouraged.

Peter, for his part, realizes both the fact that his love is weak and the fact that Jesus does everything He can to help him not to give up. He wants to be sincere and stay close to Jesus. And his answer to the third question is a testimony of how his heart, even if wounded, wants to be placed entirely in the hands of Jesus: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." (v. 17)

Thus, we discover that this is not only a threefold dialogue that recalls and surmounts Peter's threefold denial before the Passion. Here we have an example of a dialogue that marks a path based on that true love which fosters reconciliation and encourages growth and responsibility with regard to oneself and others. We catch a glimpse of how this dialogue between Jesus and Peter is a model of spiritual and human education.

Here are some observations that are useful to us who accompany children and youths in their growth and maturation.

True love is based on trust that never fails

After the betrayal, Jesus not only forgives Peter, but He goes even further: He entrusts him with a greater responsibility. This represents an extraordinary educational lesson for us: the trust given is a renewed confirmation of the respect we have for the person. It is a love that confers both dignity and responsibility.

Jesus does not limit himself to forgiving, but gives Peter back his mission, enriched by a new understanding.

Respect for individual times and paths

Peter's betrayal foretold by Jesus is not followed by the commonplace reaction of "I told you so!" Jesus "sees" betrayal, but He also "sees" beyond. Jesus' love is a love that knows human weakness but has the strength to stir up the seed of goodness within the wounded heart — and this seed never disappears. Here we see how Jesus finds what Don Bosco called "the point of goodness in the heart of every boy" and does everything possible to make it emerge. Evil committed must never have the last word. The last word must be spoken only by love, the charity of the Good Shepherd.

This means having correct patience and respect for the right moment. Experience teaches us time and again that evil committed only needs to be met with affection, patience, and compassion, especially where children and youths are concerned. Don Bosco comments on this very well when he speaks of the Preventive System. The moment when children and youths feel they are surrounded by a mature and adult love, which facilitates and does not condemn, which listens and does not command, propels that hidden but ever-present point of goodness toward the good. It is a spring that sets in motion surprises of goodness that often have been either forgotten or overwhelmed by negative experiences lived and/or suffered.

How urgent it is today that our children and youths find healthy and mature, patient and far-sighted adults, parents, and educators! Authentic are those paths that respect the uniqueness of the person with his weaknesses but also with his potential. We are true benefactors when we can see time as a space for gradual and consistent growth. It is an attitude that avoids proposing or, even worse, imposing standardized models that put people into boxes.

Comparisons and the temptation to compete

Toward the end of the encounter between Jesus and Peter, there is a detail about which I would like to make a comment. Peter asks Jesus about John, "And him?" Jesus cuts it short, as we say today: "If I want him to stay until I come, what does it matter to you?"

It is a very curt answer, and one that is a good lesson for Peter. In a nutshell, Jesus invites Peter to focus on his own growth without asking curious and useless questions about others. And this "dry" answer remains for us! To be responsible and help others toward



*Rector Major Fr. Fabio Attard, SDB, greets a young man
Credit: Agenzia Info Salesiana (ANS)*

self-responsibility also implies clarifying boundaries so that the growth process does not go off-track. The risk of making comparisons and being in competition with others is detrimental. The true educational path is personal, not competitive. Diverting one's attention from oneself to look at others diverts attention from one's own journey.

Conclusion: education as a relationship of love that begets the future

The passage culminates in the invitation, "You follow me." These three words contain the essence of the Christian educational process: personal discipleship, direct relationship with the Master. Authentic education is not the transmission of concepts, but an introduction to a living relationship.

The threefold "Do you love me?" reveals that love is the foundation of every authentic educational relationship. Only when the educator truly loves the student, and the student responds with love, is that space of freedom and trust created in which the person can grow fully. Christian education, the Salesian experience, finds in this passage a sublime model: a process of transformation based on love, forgiveness, trust, and respect for freedom.



Rector Major Fr. Fabio Attard, SDB, with young people during celebrations for the feast of Mary Help of Christians
Credit: Agenzia Info Salesiana (ANS)

Discover the Salesian Family Groups

Be Inspired. Be Informed. Be Moved to Serve

BY MRS. ANDREA ZIMMERMAN, SALESIAN FAMILY SDB DELEGATE, SALESIAN COOPERATOR

Have you ever wondered who makes up the Salesian Family? In our new feature series of articles, we're highlighting the **Salesian Family Groups** — a global and province network of individuals and communities inspired by St. John Bosco's vision of serving the young and the poor. Through their ministries, they bring hope, education, and accompaniment to those most in need.

- ✦ Who are they?
- ✦ What do they do?
- ✦ What can we learn from their struggles, joys, and persistence?

Join us as we explore stories of faith in action, uncover the diverse ministries that shape the Salesian Family, and invite you to witness how Don Bosco's dream continues to capture hearts and transform lives today.

- ✦ Learn how their commitment transforms lives — and how we, too, can be inspired to act.
- ✦ Join us on this journey of discovery, inspiration, and faith in action. *Our first story features the **Don Bosco Volunteers**, as told by Fr. Bill Ferruzzi, SDB.*
- ✦ Stay tuned for more stories throughout the year that will touch your heart and stir your spirit.



*An image of Bl. Philip Rinaldi, founder of the Don Bosco Volunteers
Credit: Istituto Secolare delle Volontarie di Don Bosco (Don Bosco Volunteers)*

The Don Bosco Volunteers *Volunteers of Don Bosco*

BY FR. BILL FERRUZZI, SDB

I have been asked to share a few thoughts about the Don Bosco Volunteers (DBVs), as they are known in this part of the world. Who are they? "They are consecrated seculars, that is, they observe the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience and they live in the world like any secular people" (www.volontariedonbosco.org/en/).

Because of their charism and its requirements, they are perhaps the most "mysterious" of all the members of the Salesian Family. In this brief article, I have time to share only two things: first, what is my work with them and how does it impact their life and mission, and second, what is this mysterious "reserve" which is proper to them.

I have been the "ecclesiastical assistant" (E.A.) for the Paterson Subgroup of the Don Bosco Volunteers in North America for about fourteen years. By telling you what an "E.A." is not, perhaps I can

thereby explain to you what an E.A. is. First of all, the ecclesiastical assistant is not the creation of the Salesians. Many secular institutes, especially those that do not have priests as members, have ecclesiastical assistants. It's a well-known term!

People often ask me, "Are you the one in charge of the DBVs?" I am not. They are an autonomous group, and they have their own leadership structure on the local, regional, and world levels. "Well, then, are you their confessor?" No. Since they live by themselves, they are free to approach a confessor of their own choice. This, of course, does not mean that I cannot or do not hear their confessions. "Well, then, are you their chaplain?" No. Since they do not live in traditional religious communities, they go to Mass and devotions usually in their local parishes."

Well, are you their spiritual director?" No, many of the DBVs, since they live in various places, choose spiritual directors of their own. That doesn't mean that I do not give them spiritual direction when I am asked.

At this point, you might be tempted to ask, in the words of a famous Mel Brooks movie, "Just what exactly is it that you do do?" My main responsibilities are to provide a monthly day of recollection for the DBVs, collaborate with them in planning their annual retreat, assist them in the formation of new members, and expedite the process of choosing local leadership. In short, to make sure they feel connected to and a part of the greater Salesian Family. Part of this is accomplished by sending them greetings on the major Salesian feasts and by being available to answer phone calls and emails when the need arises.

There are many misconceptions and strange beliefs about the "reserve" of the DBVs, a part of their spirituality that goes back to their founder, Bl. Philip Rinaldi. It is challenging, to say the least. It makes it a bit difficult to recruit new members, at least in the U.S. But it's important, and, according to Fr. Rinaldi, essential.

It means this: "We don't reveal to other persons that we are consecrated." In fact, for this reason, we do not publish lists, names, and addresses of Don Bosco Volunteers. We do not publish their pictures. This should not be a surprise to us, for we have all had experiences of Salesians who work in foreign countries who cannot have their names and photos disseminated, because it would jeopardize their missionary work (I know personally three such SDBs in this situation!).

A recent incident might help us to understand. One of our DBVs was asked to give a talk in her parish. She did so without giving any indication of her consecrated status. After her talk, a young man approached her and said, "I have always had a problem with priests and religious. I would never speak to either one of them as I am speaking with you. I feel I can trust you and share my story with you."

This conversation would probably never have taken place if that DBV had presented herself in public as a religious or as a consecrated secular! Bl. Philip knew what he was talking about.

In my experience, I can tell you that many other secular institutes have their own proper form of reserve. There are different variations, but the same basic theme.



Don Bosco Volunteers (VDB): Quick Facts

- **Lay Consecrated Life:** VDB members are lay women who take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, living fully in the world while consecrating their lives to God in the spirit of St. John Bosco.
- **Founded in 1917:** Established in Turin by (now Bl.) Fr. Philip Rinaldi, they were among the first secular institutes officially recognized by the Church.
- **Global Mission:** Present in over 50 countries and about 1,200 members (as of 2020), they bring Gospel values into daily life through quiet service in schools, offices, hospitals, and neighborhoods.
- **In the World, Not Cloistered:** They wear no habits, live independently or with family, and hold regular jobs — blending faith and mission in everyday contexts.
- **Apostolic Work:** Their ministries encompass education, catechesis, social work, parish involvement, and empowering young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and vulnerable communities. They live the Salesian spirituality in ordinary occupations, making God's love present in all secular environments.
- **Deep Spirituality:** Rooted in Salesian spirituality, they live a disciplined prayer life, attend formation, and model themselves after Mary, faithful, present, and loving in ordinary life.



For more information on the Don Bosco Volunteers, visit their website at www.volontariedonbosco.org/en or feel free to contact Fr. Bill Ferruzzi, SDB, at williamferruzzi@gmail.com.



Mrs. Jeanie Cahill and her fellow attendees at the St. Vincent de Paul CCW Pilgrimage to the Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary, Queen of the Universe in Orlando, FL
Credit: Mrs. Jeanie Cahill

Blessings Received Filled with Joy *Growing in Holiness*

BY MRS. JEANIE CAHILL, SALESIAN COOPERATOR

This spring, I had the privilege of joining the St. Vincent de Paul CCW Pilgrimage to the Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary, Queen of the Universe in Orlando, FL. We were all blessed with such a beautiful day of faith and fellowship and gorgeous weather!



On this pilgrimage, I received the plenary indulgence and a renewed experience of Blessed Mother continuing to guide me closer to her son. I also appreciated how I experienced a deeper gratitude for all the blessings I received filled with joy and a new hope in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The *Salesian Family Snippets* (*Snippets*) editorial team would love to hear about your pilgrimage stories and the spiritual gifts you've received.

Share your experiences with us, and we will feature them in Snippets throughout the year.

Please send your Jubilee Pilgrimage stories to
Andrea Zimmerman or **Julia St. Clair** at:

andreazimm36@gmail.com
communications@salesians.org

We look forward to celebrating your journey of faith during this Jubilee Year!

Share your story. Stare your faith. Share hope. Share love.



Fr. Manny Gallo, SDB (left), leads the procession to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe with the Rosary of Hope and Blessing of Mary Help of Christians in Stony Point, NY.
Credit: Jennifer Passerino, Salesian Family



Subscribe

Receive future issues!



Strenna 2025



Maria Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis!

"Anchored in hope, pilgrims with young people"

