



# SALESIAN

Canada &  
Eastern USA

news



Fr. Provincial Tim Zak, SDB, gifts Fr. Hugo Orozco, SDB, General Councilor for the Interamerica Region, with a Salesian High backpack  
Photo by Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

## The Living History of the Gospel and Don Bosco

By Fr. Provincial Tim Zak, SDB

Dear Confreres,

This year, we celebrate the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the Salesians of Don Bosco in the USA. This was one of the motives for the Rector Major's recent visit to California, Washington, D.C., and the New York-New Jersey area. It's interesting to recall some of the details of the arrival of the first SDBs to NY. I thank Fr. Mike Mendl

for his work in this area. I hope you have all read *"The Zeal of the Salesians is just the Thing..." Salesian Work in New York*. Even if you're familiar with these events, it's good for us to hear them again, because they can renew in us the same apostolic zeal that we find in the first Salesians who came here.

Several appeals had been made to Don Bosco, as early as 1883, by Archbishop Corrigan, the Coadjutor Archbishop of Cardinal McCloskey of New York. Corrigan was at the North American College in Rome in 1883 when he wrote: "In the name of the Cardinal of New York, I write to inform you of the wretched lot of the Italians in that city. Last year about 30,000 came to us, but we have only one Italian church and there are few priests. These poor people come to us deprived of everything. Besides that they are, mostly, little instructed in Christian doctrine. Hence it would be truly an apostolic work to take up their spiritual care. Would you be able to undertake it?" Four months later, Corrigan wrote to Don Bosco again: "I cannot, therefore, but beg you to remember the lot of these wretched people; all the more because every year thousands are coming to this port from Italy. Alas! Must all these many Italian immigrants lose their faith?... There are some Italian priests, but they do not want to work among their compatriots."

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Finally, on Saturday, November 23, 1898 (almost 125 years ago), three Salesians arrived in New York: Fr. Ernest Coppo, the superior, Fr. Marcellino Scagliola, and Brother Faustino Squassoni. An unknown layman, possibly a vocation prospect, was with them. Coppo had studied at the Salesian school in Borgo San Martino, but he was ordained a diocesan priest. Soon after ordination, he decided to join the Salesians and made his profession at 24 years of age. Four years later, at 28 years of age, he set out as a missionary to New York. Scagliola had been a missionary in Argentina, then worked in Spain before coming to the USA. He was 55 years old when he was assigned to this missionary expedition. Squassoni was 27 years old. He made his first profession one month before he left Italy for

New York. Considering their ages and short time in Salesian religious life and that there were only four in the group, we can admire their courageous availability to go forth to an unknown land.

This small group of Salesian missionaries was welcomed by the Archbishop and sent to begin their work right away as chaplains to Catholic schools and religious Sisters. They lived on E. 12th St. and said Mass, heard confessions, and gave catechism classes in the basement of St. Brigid's. They were not discouraged by the low numbers of Italians who practiced their faith regularly. After spending December going door-to-door with flyers about the services in Italian at St. Brigid's, 12 people came to Christmas Mass, and only eight came on New Year's Day. They continued to visit homes, offer Lenten missions, visit hospitals and jails, celebrate the sacraments, preach in Italian in other churches, teach catechism, and prepare the people for Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, and marriage. They arranged for English as a second language classes. They organized parish groups and societies. They started a weekly newspaper in Italian. In a letter to Fr. Rua, Fr. Coppo described a typical Sunday: two Masses with a sermon, confessions, instructions, catechism lessons, meetings of the parish societies, baptisms and marriages, vespers and benediction, the Rosary followed by a sermon and benediction, then home for supper at 10:00 pm. By 1900, they were regularly celebrating four Sunday Masses with about 2,000 people in attendance.

This abbreviated story of the first Salesians to New York helps us to recognize the heart of Jesus beating in



Fr. Hugo and Br. Tom Dion, SDB  
Photo by Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

these missionaries. At Province Day, Fr. Hugo highlighted Jesus' response as he disembarks from the boat and meets the vast crowd, "...his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things." Jesus models for the disciples and for us how to be a shepherd or pastor and a teacher. Upon disembarking, the first Salesians who arrived in New York found thousands of Italian Catholics going their separate ways, not coming together for worship, and ignorant of the truths of the faith, like sheep without a shepherd. The Salesians followed Jesus in the spirit of Don Bosco, becoming pastors and teachers to this vast crowd. Their apostolic zeal, loving-kindness, and self-sacrifice won the people over so they could be nourished. It's interesting to note that this Gospel passage introduces the multiplication of loaves and fishes. Jesus is with the people on the peripheries, sees their hunger, and feeds them. These gestures were repeated by the early Salesian missionaries to our land.

The living history of the Gospel and Don Bosco is not only for the SDBs but involves many people who share the

Salesian charism, including the young people themselves. They are converted from having been sheep to becoming shepherds. As a significant way to memorialize the visit of the Rector Major for the 125th anniversary of Salesians coming to this land, we did not open a new work or even put up a plaque. Instead, I have challenged each Salesian community to identify and accompany young adults to share in the Salesian mission as volunteers, missionaries, and members of the groups of the Salesian Family. The God who called those first young adult Salesians to be missionaries to Canada and the USA never tires of calling us to follow him more closely and serve his people.



USA and Canadian flags merged  
Photo courtesy of Canva Pro

We can be grateful for the witness of men like Coppo, Scargliola, Squassoni, and the fourth unnamed missionary. The legacy of the early Salesians to Canada and the USA inspires us to have the heart of Christ the Good Shepherd, giving ourselves generously in the Salesian mission of evangelization and education. Well aware of our failures and limitations, our inconsistencies and fears, we are willing to step out of the boat with Jesus, that is go beyond our comfort zones and sense of safety, to be like Don Bosco, pastors, and teachers, Salesians for the young people of today.

Fr. Tim Zak

## SYM Corner



Fr. Lou Molinelli, SDB (second from the left),  
with Don Bosco Prep students, Administrators' Meeting 2022  
Photo by Salesian Youth Ministry

## Reflections on Strenna 2023, Pt. VI

By Fr. Lou Molinelli, SDB,  
Province Delegate of Youth  
Ministry

In Part Five of the strenna commentary by our Rector Major, Fr. Ángel challenges us to follow the lead of Don Bosco in involving a broad spectrum of people in the Salesian mission. If we look at the very beginnings of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, we see that a broad swath of people—priests and lay people of all walks of life—came together to assist Don Bosco in his work for the young. They were motivated by the same zeal and desire that he had, namely the salvation of the souls of the young. Don Bosco had a way of creating energy among his collaborators, seeing them not just as helpers in the mission, but as brothers and sisters working in communion with him for a common mission. As we look at our Salesian Family today, this reality bears all the more significance in this era of living the spirit of the ecclesiology of Vatican II.

The Rector Major points out to us that, in our Salesian Family, we have reached a "point of no return" as we follow the Salesian mission as a communion in our family. This puts us in full harmony with the Church under the guidance of Pope Francis. To live in this way is truly prophetic!

The ultimate goal of Don Bosco's mission is the salvation of the souls of the young and the transformation of society. This is not easy! Don Bosco was singly focused on this vision with two traits that kept him faithful: his tireless diligence and his resiliency in the face of obstacles. He never compromised on the mission and on his style of communion, which included the great respect and participation of the laity from all walks of life. It was his example that gave unity to the mission, and it still does today.

We can never go back to 1846. Rather, we can take the lessons learned through Don Bosco's methodology and make them a reality today. However, we must do this together as all members of the Salesian Family by building communion in the family spirit and within the vast Salesian movement. This is our legacy; this is the precious gift we possess.



The goal then is for us to make sure our mindset embraces Don Bosco's understanding of family as a bond of communion. There is no room for separation or a pseudo-caste system. We are all in this together, sharing our gifts and zeal for the salvation of souls. This unity of vision and purpose is our heritage!

## Province News



Br. Gérard Richard, SDB, on his 100th birthday  
Photo by Fr. Provincial Tim Zak, SDB

## Celebrating Br. Gérard Richard, SDB

By Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

(Sherbrooke, QC – February 9) – Fr. Provincial Tim Zak, SDB, traveled to Sherbrooke to join the local Salesian community in celebrating the 100th birthday of Br. Gerard Richard on Monday, January 30. Fr. Tim wrote to the confreres of the SUE Province: "We congratulate and accompany with our prayers Br. Gérard Richard, SDB, of our Sherbrooke community, as he celebrated his 100th birthday! We give thanks to God for the great witness of faith and service that Br. Gérard has provided for us over the past many decades. Happy Birthday, Br. Gérard! Bonne anniversaire Frère Gérard!"



Salesians from Montreal, Canadian-born Br. Branden Gordon, and Abp. Luc Cyr of Sherbrooke also took part in the festivities.

Br. Gérard is the second confrere of our province to attain 100 years. The first was Br. Frank Gambaro, who died in 1987, not long after reaching his centennial.

## Two Province Observances

By Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

(New Rochelle, NY – February 9) – On Saturday, February 4, two province observances occurred at the Marian Shrine in Haverstraw, NY.

The first occurrence was the annual celebration of Province Day, moved up from its customary date in May in order to accommodate the second occurrence, one of four province meetings aimed at helping the Rector Major discern the appointment of a new provincial.

Fr. Hugo Orozco, the regional councilor for Interamerica, presided at both Mass in the Shrine chapel and the assembly in Fr. Lee Hall of the confreres from the New York metro area and from Boston.

The Eucharistic celebration was a votive Mass of Mary Help of Christians with the readings of the weekday. It began on time at 9:00 am ET and lasted just 40 minutes. The congregation included 34 concelebrating priests, two deacons, 19 brothers, a prenovice, four candidates from Orange, and two other priests—a total of 52 confreres.

Fr. Hugo gave what was probably the shortest homily in the history of provincial feast days in our province. The gospel reading (Mark 6:30-34) called our attention to Jesus' compassion for the crowds who had come to him. Fr. Hugo urged the



Fr. Hugo and Fr. Provincial Tim Zak, SDB  
Photo by Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

confreres to strive to be like Jesus, to have compassionate hearts.

The assembly for the discernment process in Lee Hall was basically the same group. After a coffee break, Fr. Hugo initiated the discernment by explaining the multi-step process to be followed. Later he also explained the process that the Rector Major and general council would follow, probably in July, in selecting the confrere who will lead the province for the next six years, based in large part on the consultation of the province.

After praying, the Salesians and candidates, sitting at 10 or 12 tables, discussed the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges of the province; some of these were voiced for everyone to hear. Then Fr. Hugo asked the professed participants to write 3 names on slips of paper and pass these to him. Two brothers helped him compile a list of all the names put forward—about 20 of them—which were projected without any indication of the number of times they were listed.

Then the confreres were asked to fill out an online form, partly about

themselves (in order to weigh the relative value of the suggestions) and partly with first, second, and third choices for a provincial and their reasons for those choices. This information constitutes the heart of what Fr. Hugo will take back to Turin from this Marian Shrine assembly as well as from parallel assemblies in Tampa, Etobicoke, and Surrey. (The general council has been meeting at the Motherhouse in Turin while Sacro Cuore in Rome undergoes renovation.)

This consultation process took two and a half hours. By 12:30 pm ET, everyone was ready to eat and did justice to the hors d'oeuvres and the buffet luncheon. Fr. Tim Zak presented a film clip about what the Salesians are doing for the suffering people in Ukraine, who will be the beneficiaries again this year of the communities' gifts for Province Day. The confreres from Orange, under the leadership of Br. Sal Sammarco, sang two hymns that Br. Sal had composed. There was a surfeit of leftovers for confreres to take home, and thus closed the day's festivities.

### **Addition by**

**Fr. Provincial Tim Zak, SDB**

*Yesterday, Fr. Hugo Orozco, General Councilor for the Interamerica Region, concluded his visit to the SUE province. He was with us for the consultation for the next provincial, Province Day, and the post-novitiate curatorium. Thanks to Fr. Hugo for getting around the province in such a short time, and getting to know our confreres and the province in a more personal way. Thanks to everyone who made the sacrifices to be part of this consultation process. If you have not*



(from left to right) Br. Michael Nguyen, SDB; Fr. Hugo; and Br. Travis Gunther, SDB  
Photo by Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

already done so, please send your written recommendations to Fr. Hugo at [interamerica@sdb.org](mailto:interamerica@sdb.org).

View photos from *Province Day* and *the consultation for a new provincial*.

## World Day of Prayer for the Sick

By Fr. Provincial Tim Zak, SDB

(New Rochelle, NY – February 9) – This Saturday, February 11, is the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. It is also the 31st World Day of the Sick. The Pope’s message for this day invites us to reflect on walking together with the sick with closeness, compassion, and tenderness. Let us keep in our prayers our sick and elder confreres, giving them a phone call or sending them a card.

## Learn About Integral Ecology Salesian Style This Weekend

Join Salesian Family this Saturday, February 11, for Integral Ecology Salesian Style from 10:00 am to 12:00

pm ET. The session will be with Sr. Alessandra Smerilli, FMA, Secretary of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

Register today!

## East Boston: Celebrating Our Patron and Founder

By Br. Bob Metell, SDB

(East Boston, MA – February 8) – Many projects and events happen in beautiful East Boston, where planes fly by more frequently than birds.

January brought the month-long Don Bosco and St. Francis de Sales coloring/drawing competitions and the Don Bosco Trivia contest. Fr. Bill Bucciferro is pictured with some of the coloring contest winners. The coloring contest was done as part of the daily arts and crafts program that Fr. Bill assisted.

On the Feast of Don Bosco, Fr. Bill celebrated an ecumenical prayer service with the club members. The club members come from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Most of our religious services, the daily Good Nights, and weekly Faith Time programs are ecumenically based on moral and good citizenship themes.

The Don Bosco and St. Francis de Sales celebrations end with a special meal with pizza, nachos, and tater totes with homemade cookies for snacks and dessert provided by me and the kitchen crew.

Stay tuned for the Valentine's Day and St. Patrick's Day events!



Fr. Bill Bucciferro, SDB, and some of the coloring contest winners  
Photo by Br. Bob Metell, SDB



Auxiliary Bishop of London Rev. Joseph Dabrowski, CSMA, and Etobicoke Director Fr. John Louis Mariapragasam, SDB (both center) with Salesian Family after the Mass  
Photo courtesy of St. Benedict Parish's Facebook

## Etobicoke: Faith and Community at St. Benedict Parish

(Etobicoke, ON – February 8) – St. Benedict Parish was honored and delighted to welcome the Auxiliary Bishop of London Rev. Joseph Dabrowski, CSMA, as well as Fr. Chris and Fr. Peter (also Michaelite Fathers) on the Feast of St. John Bosco. Following Mass, the celebration continued in the parish hall with fellowship.

Additionally, St. Benedict Parish's mother's group would like to extend a huge thank you to Nathalie Bedros D'Andrea, who gave a powerful talk on Wednesday, February 1, at the mother's group meeting. Nathalie, a longtime member of the parish community, spoke on emotional intelligence and the Christian faith. It was a wonderful evening of prayer and learning from a devout and blessed parishioner.

Thank you to all who attended. Hope to see you next month!



Shaw students get into the spirit during Mass  
Photo courtesy of [www.archbishopshaw.org](http://www.archbishopshaw.org)



Salesian Family in Cassin Commons after the Family Mass  
Photo courtesy of Salesian High School's Facebook



(from left to right) Most Reverend Gregory Aymond, Archbishop of New Orleans and Fr. Mark Hyde, SDB  
Photo courtesy of [www.archbishopshaw.org](http://www.archbishopshaw.org)

Last, Fr. Steve's Theology IV students recreated the life of Don Bosco in a small play. The play illustrated his extraordinary childhood, his sufferings and sacrifices, and his triumphant legacy.



Read more on Shaw's website and watch the play on YouTube!



Bishop Kevin J. Sweeney, Diocese of Paterson in New Jersey (center) with Ramsey community members and Don Bosco Prep altar servers  
Photo by Jennifer Passerino

## Marrero: Correlating the Strenna with Don Bosco's Feast Day

(Marrero, LA – February 8) – Last week, Archbishop Shaw High School (Shaw) was blessed to be joined by the Most Reverend Gregory Aymond, Archbishop of New Orleans for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which commemorated the life and example of St. John Bosco.

Shaw also took time to contemplate this year's strenna and correlate it with the life of our father and founder.

## New Rochelle: Gathering Together for Don Bosco

(New Rochelle, NY – February 8) – On Sunday, January 29, Salesian High School (Salesian High) began celebrations for Don Bosco with a Family Mass that honored our founder. Two days later, the Auxiliary Bishop of New York and Pastor of Sts. John and Paul Parish in Larchmont, NY, Bishop John Bonnici, celebrated Mass with members of the Salesian community. A festive luncheon followed for Salesian High, Salesian Missions, and Salesian Provincial Center staff.

## Ramsey: Being Called to Serve Like Don Bosco

By Jennifer Passerino, P'15, '20, Director of Events & Public Relations, Don Bosco Prep, Ramsey, NJ

(Ramsey, NJ – February 7) – Don Bosco Prep celebrated the feast of our patron, St. John Bosco, at a school community Mass on Tuesday, January 31. Bishop Kevin J. Sweeney, Diocese of Paterson in

New Jersey, celebrated the Mass and reminded Ironmen that we are called to serve as Don Bosco always did.

The Mass was concelebrated by Ramsey Director Fr. Abraham Feliciano, SDB, and the members of the Don Bosco Prep Salesian community—Fr. Thomas Dunne, SDB; Fr. John Blanco, SDB; Fr. Lou Konopelski, SDB; Fr. Jim McKenna, SDB; and Fr. Jim Mulloy, SDB. Fr. Abraham presented the bishop with a commemorative statue of Don Bosco in honor of his special visit and the feast day.



Students at this year's Don Bosco Gala  
Photo by Chioma Okoye



Tampa Director Fr. Franco Pinto, SDB (center),  
with Salesian Family members  
Photo by Chioma Okoye

## Tampa: How Our Salesian Family Grows God's Kingdom

By Chioma Okoye, Director of Communications, Mary Help of Christians Center, Tampa, FL

(Tampa, FL – February 7) – At Mary Help of Christians Tampa, we are blessed to have not only the spiritual but also the physical components of Don Bosco's oratory model present on campus: a home that welcomes, a school that prepares for life, a parish that evangelizes, and a playground where friends can meet. Although we are privileged to have a number of priests and brothers who minister to all members of the Salesian Family, as Fr. Ángel highlighted in this year's Strenna, *"the richness of being part of this human and Salesian family where so many in this Family are laymen and laywomen, [and where as consecrated persons] we must enrich ourselves with this complementarity"* (Strenna 2023, 11).

This year, we are being invited to focus

on the collaboration between religious and laypeople. We, as a Salesian Family, are also being called to grow the kingdom of God. Since we know that the "Kingdom of God is in your [our] midst" (Luke 17:21), it is clear that we all have a distinct role to play. This year's festivities to celebrate the Feast of St. John Bosco give a snapshot into how Mary Help of Christians Tampa lives out the Salesian mission and specifically this year's strenna: "As yeast in today's human family."

The celebrations included the Annual Don Bosco Festival hosted by Mary Help of Christians Parish, Don Bosco Day hosted by Cristo Rey Tampa Salesian High School, and the Don Bosco Gala hosted by the Mary Help of Christians Center. The festival consisted of carnival games, great International food, line dancing, farm animals, and lots of fellowship. Prior to the festival, Don Bosco Day was celebrated on the Feast of St. John Bosco, Tuesday, January 31, and consisted of games, obstacle courses, tournaments, faculty-prepared lunch, and a spectacular talent show. Last but not least, the annual Don Bosco Gala included dinner, live and silent auctions, and dancing. Each event was

headed by the laity with the cooperation of Salesian religious.

There is beauty and holiness in the partnership of a Salesian Family that participates in the building of God's kingdom. Here at Mary Help, we entrust everything to Our Blessed Mother Mary, Help of Christians and ask for her continued intercession in being the yeast that germinates the world.



An altar server in front of the statue of St. John Bosco  
Photo by Chioma Okoye

*St. John Bosco, pray for us!  
Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us!*

## Birthdays Salesian Holiness



### Birthdays

- February 10: Fr. Miguel Suarez
- February 10: Fr. Wilgintz Polynice
- February 11: Fr. Stephen Leake
- February 12: Br. Richard Pasaik
- February 12: Fr. Samson Antony
- February 22: Fr. Steve Shafran

### Salesian Holiness

- February 9: Bl. Eusebia Palomino

## Prayers for Healing Deceased



### Prayers for Healing

- José María Acosta Zunini, brother of Fr. Raúl M. Acosta Zunini, SDB
- Vinny Camire, nephew of Fr. Mark Hyde, SDB
- Isolina Feliciano-Gonnion, sister of Fr. Abraham Feliciano, SDB
- Julie Kirkland, Office Manager, St. John Bosco Parish, Harvey, LA
- Br. Charles Mayer, SDB
- Raquel Nash, niece of Fr. John Nazzaro, SDB
- Robert Serio, nephew of Fr. John Serio, SDB
- Fr. Wacław Swierzbiolek, SDB



Br. Minh-Tu Nguyen, SDB  
Photo by Br. Reegan Ledet, SDB

### Weekly Prayer

for February 9-15, 2023

From February 9-15, please pray in your communities and works for Br. Minh-Tu Nguyen (SUO), who is in post novitiate.

*"Let us not forget to thank: if we are bearers of gratitude, the world itself will become better, even if only a little bit, but that is enough to transmit a bit of hope."*

**- Pope Francis**

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