



SALESIAN news

Canada & Eastern USA



Fr. Pat Angelucci, assisted by Fr. Sasika Lokuhehtige, offers Mass in Spanish for over 1,000 pilgrims at the outdoor altar during summer 2023. A tower that houses the three bells from Mary Help of Christians Church in Manhattan supports them as they ring the Angelus and toll the time every 15 minutes each day. Photo by Fr. Dennis Donovan, SDB

Hudson Valley Salesians Turn Dreams into Reality

By Fr. Dennis Donovan, SDB

(Stony Point, NY – March 14) – Three years ago, the Marian Shrine’s administrative team created a strategic plan to place its work on a solid footing with service to the province, archdiocese, and local clergy around the Hudson Valley. It started with the creation of a new mission statement to offer people of all ages, **especially young people, opportunities to deepen their relationship with God. We emphasize devotion to Mary Help of Christians and the pastoral style of St.**

John Bosco and his oratory in our apostolic endeavors. Since then, we have realized the mission every day.

The retreat center serves the province and the archdiocese of New York. The shrine thrives as a place of pilgrimage for the worship of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and devotion to Mary Help of Christians. Our outreach to youth and young adults in the Hudson Valley region serves hundreds in local parish and school settings.

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Special events include Bible study, religious exhibits, fine arts programs, etc. New retreat themes include social justice and awareness of the needs of the poor.

What is being accomplished here is amazing! Four of the 12 Salesians in residence hold leadership roles. The remaining nine offer support as preachers, confessors, speakers, and hosts who offer hospitality to retreatants and other guests. Much support comes through the help of our senior Salesians, who, although considered by many to be “retired,” remain active through the service they provide while they enjoy superior physical and medical care.



The shrine hosts about five large group pilgrimages each summer.
Photo by Fr. Dennis Donovan, SDB

The Hudson Valley Salesian Cooperators are involved in many daily operations. A new group of ADMA is in formation. Additionally, the manual *Hearts Present and Joyful* is used for the ongoing formation of the laity.

The projects are financially viable through diverse sources of income. Our primary sources are the Don Bosco Bookstore and reservations at the Don Bosco Retreat Center. The Salesian community sustains the operations through the Salesians' personal income, stipends, and aid for senior care. Annual appeals and a fundraising gala sustain special events and devotions that the Salesians have become known for. Income from the Mary Help of Christians Chapel collections, candle donations, and religious services cover the budget. The former Blue Gate Residence (which later served as the center for the Korean Apostolate) has been transformed into Emmaus, a house for private retreats, which has become popular with secular clergy and religious.

Yet we recognize there are some needs for continued growth. Additional personnel would support the increasing demand for quality retreat programs and confessors available for them. While the "retired" Salesians are great

confessors during the daytime hours, they are generally not able to function at night and are not able to offer the daily Masses at the shrine.

The retreat center has the most activity volume and includes programs for youth and young adults and groups from area parishes, schools, and provincial and archdiocesan ministries. The shrine chapel serves a steady clientele that attends daily/ weekly Masses, confessions, and devotions, like the Stations of the Cross and Rosary. Occasionally a pilgrimage of 1,000 to 4,000 people will take place for a day, especially in the summer.

Strategic planning continues every two weeks and gives the administrative team opportunities for new ideas. Our application to the USCCB to be designated a "National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians" is in process. This designation would allow us to further promote the work. Since schools and parishes in New Jersey are reluctant to participate in our programs due to transportation costs, we would like to find ways to collaborate with a transportation company that would provide economical bus service from various parts of the Garden State.

The rear of the Becchi House has been cleaned out to make room for a high-tech exhibit space about the history of the Salesians, beginning with the Dream of Don Bosco at Becchi and culminating with the Salesian expansion throughout the world up to Stony Point.

We've identified and overcome challenges that have stifled our ability to reach more young adults. In collaboration with the Archdiocese of New York, we will create a young adult



A visit to the Becchi House is a stop for every person on a youth retreat. This provides them with an opportunity to discuss Don Bosco's Dream of Nine Years Old in the setting of the room where the dream happened.
Photo by Fr. Dennis Donovan, SDB

leadership program for 21-30-year-olds who could potentially begin young adult ministry in their parishes under Salesian mentoring.

The potential is great. With the Holy Spirit's guidance and the blessings of Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco's dream will continue to develop on this sacred ground called the Marian Shrine!

International News

Mexico: Salesian Lenten Retreat

By Br. Tom Junis, SDB

(Tlaquepaque, JA – March 14) – On Sunday, March 10, the Salesians in Tlaquepaque held a Lenten retreat for all groups of the Salesian Youth Movement of the Oratory of San Javier. I accompanied a group in the oratory called *Amigos de Domingo Savio*. It was for preteens and teens and originated in the St. Dominic Savio Club that started in the SUE Province. The theme was seeking the face of Jesus and discerning the people God calls us to be.



Lenten retreat for all groups of the Salesian Youth Movement of the Oratory of San Javier
Courtesy of Br. Tom Junis, SDB



(from left to right) Fr. Steve Ryan, SDB; Fr. George Hanna, SDB; Fr. Ky Nguyen, SDB; and Br. Reegan Ledet, SDB
Photo by Br. Kevin White, SDB



Provincial Fr. Dominic Tran, SDB, entertains young people with card tricks in the spirit of Don Bosco, patron saint of magicians.
Photo by Fr. Luc Lantagne, SDB

Province News

Marrero: Celebrating Fr. George Hanna, SDB

By Br. Kevin White, SDB

(Marrero, LA – March 14) – On Tuesday, March 5, Fr. George Hanna, the eldest member of the Salesian community of Marrero, commemorated his 58th anniversary of priestly ordination. This was a few months after Fr. George celebrated his 90th birthday last November.

Fr. George was asked to share some of his reflections about this special day to the community. He reminisced on the day of his ordination 58 years ago. Fr. George shared that he was ordained a priest in Rome, Italy. Before then, Fr. George studied theology for four years in Italy. Prior to that, Fr. George was in practical training as a teacher in a Salesian school in Beirut, Lebanon, for three years.

During his reminiscences, Fr. George noted that he saw his mother and brother for the first time in seven years at his ordination. The inability to see his

immediate family for so long would foreshadow his life of sacrifice as a Salesian priest. Anyone who knows Fr. George knows that he sacrifices his time, energy, and gifts in the service of others and ultimately for the salvation of souls. The Salesian community of Marrero was privileged to have these moments to honor Fr. George and all he does for the people of the West Bank.

Montréal: Provincial Visit to the DBLM

By Fr. Luc Lantagne, SDB

(Montréal, QC – March 13) – Earlier this month, Provincial Fr. Dominic Tran, SDB, visited the Salesian presence in Montréal. The Don Bosco Latino Ministry (DBLM) joyfully received Fr. Dominic, who entertained us as both a superior and card magician, which left our young people with a fresh breath of Salesianity.

The DBLM offers the youth and their parents varied comprehensive formation programs, generating a passionate knowledge of Don Bosco and living genuine Salesian spirituality. Young people from ages seven to 35 participate in the programs, which are conducted in small groups and thereby

foster appropriate social interaction according to our Salesian pedagogy. Parents reinforce the topics discussed in the programs with their children, who have previously been introduced to these topics by trained animators, adult couples, and an SDB. Moments of formation, spirituality, fun, and service occur, according to Don Bosco's Salesian Project: home, school, parish, and playground. The fruits of this Salesian model are visible. Thank you, Fr. Dominic, for the pastoral impulse that your visit has inspired. DBLM is proud to belong to the Salesian Family.

New Rochelle: FBI Explorer Program

(New Rochelle, NY – March 13) – Earlier this month, Salesian High School had an opportunity to visit members of the FBI Explorer Scouting program. Daniel Brito '24, Luis Lozano '25, Aiden Emeric '26, and Jack Leone '27 participated in their first competition at the Police Academy in Queens, NY.



Salesian High students and members of the FBI explorer program
Courtesy of Salesian High School's Facebook

These students took on law enforcement challenges at the FBI Explorer program competition, where they faced lifelike scenarios from traffic stops to domestic disputes. Although they competed against larger groups, Salesian High students dipped their toes into the experience and showcased determination and courage.

Ramsey: Robotics Competition Season

(Ramsey, NJ - March 13) - Last weekend, Don Bosco Prep's (DBP) junior varsity and varsity robotics teams dove into competition season with enthusiasm and determination. The competition was fierce, but DBP's teams embraced the challenge and learned invaluable lessons along the way.

A huge congratulations to the varsity team, who made it to the playoffs as part of the seventh alliance. DBP is also thrilled to announce that the team brought home the Creativity Award, which stood as a testament to their innovative spirit and problem-solving skills. Their next competition is in two weeks.



Fr. Lou Konopelski, SDB (right), with DBP robotics team members
Courtesy of Don Bosco Prep's Facebook

Stay tuned for more updates as DBP's teams continue to showcase their talents and passion for robotics!

Sherbrooke: Mission Trip to Mexico City

By Fr. Alain Léonard, SDB

(Sherbrooke, QC - March 13) - From Thursday, February 28 through Friday, March 8, twenty-four members of the Jeunes Missionnaires du Salésien (JMS) completed a mission trip to Mexico City.

They were eagerly received in a Salesian house that serves as a boarding school for at-risk adolescents. Many are orphans, homeless, or come from broken families. Others struggle with drug or alcohol problems. These young people quickly became attached to us Canadians through cultural, athletic, gastronomic, and spiritual activities, as well as manual labor and touring experiences. To help support this mission, this past school year in Sherbrooke various fundraisers were organized that generated more than Canadian C\$20,000. Since 1995, nearly C\$275,000 has been donated to the *Dejame Ayudarte* ("Let Me Help You") Foundation.



Fr. Alain Léonard, SDB (left), with JMS members in Mexico City
Courtesy of Fr. Alain Léonard, SDB

Here is the testimony of Rosemarie, a Le Salésien student:

I returned to Quebec with a heavy heart and a head full of memories. I spent the last 10 days, accompanied by other young people, in a Salesian boarding school, where 25 Mexicans, who were not endowed with the same luck as we from birth, reside. From hours spent playing soccer with the little boys to praying and talking about shared life with the older ones, I realized that no teacher or math class would teach me more than this group of young people did during my trip.

Once I stepped off the green bus that took us from the airport to the boarding school, I fell in love with each of the 25 pairs of brown eyes staring at me and their smiling faces. I had never witnessed during my journey, even in the most pampered neighborhoods, such a great joie de vivre that reigned in one place. I never thought that there, wedged between a corn tortilla stand and a slum on the mountains, I would have found more happiness than I have seen in my entire life.



JMS members during their mission trip
Courtesy of Fr. Alain Léonard, SDB



Le Salésien students and local young people from the Salesian boarding house
Courtesy of Fr. Alain Léonard, SDB



Provincial Fr. Dominic Tran, SDB (second from left), and DBLM members make a circle.
Photo by Fr. Luc Lantagne, SDB

Since they are about my age but have lived three times my life, these young people have an almost supernatural force inside them. This perhaps explains why they get up every day with a huge smile stamped on their faces. From my first steps on Mexican soil, I realized that, even if these children had had one-thousandth of the opportunities we have, they were a thousand times happier.

After a few days at the institute, the young people began to confide in and open up to us. This helped them heal and helped us grow. I understood that, despite the stereotypes about these little boys, most had been placed in boarding schools because their parents did not have the time or skills to take care of them. From having witnessed their experiences from having single mothers to abusive families, I realized how our problems, which sometimes seem as big as the world, could not be more trivial.

There is also often a huge problem with these young people's self-confidence. Unlike most of us who were raised in loving families, they have never had adequate emotional support or a parent behind them to tell them they are beautiful, good, and capable. To make matters worse, no Mexican advertisement features a dark-skinned individual. All

beauty standards and ideals are built around the dream of being born white. One day, I spoke with a 12-year-old boy as we played together. I asked him to make a list of who he thought were his three most beautiful friends in school to make him laugh. As he thought about it for a few seconds and swung his ball from hand to hand, he replied, "They are all ugly." Having assumed this was a joke, I asked him why he uttered such an atrocity. But he confirmed his words as he looked me straight in the eyes and said: "Because they are all dark and dark-skinned and can't be beautiful." It was then I realized the extent of the impact that society and the lack of love had on these young people. This talk was among my trip's most significant moments and broke my heart.



These ten days spent in the company of these children have been an incredible learning experience in every way. I deeply wish to never forget the life lessons these little souls unknowingly passed on to me. It is said that travel broadens the mind. Having returned from this experience, I can say confidently that these Mexicans have forged a new vision of life in me.



Salesian Youth Movement of the Oratory of San Javier group members
Courtesy of Br. Tom Junis, SDB



Br. Michael Nguyen, SDB
Courtesy of Province Vocations Office

Weekly Prayer for March 14-20, 2024

Please pray in your communities and works for **Br. Michael Nguyen** (SUO), who is in post-novitiate in Orange, NJ.

Birthdays
Salesian Holiness



Prayer Remembrances
Deceased



Birthdays

- March 14: Br. Charles Thenier
- March 15: Br. Robert Metell
- March 17: Fr. Iguintz Calixte
- March 19: Br. Bernard Dubé
- March 21: Fr. Leonard Carlino
- March 22: Fr. Thomas Dunne
- March 28: Fr. Piotr Basista

Prayer Remembrances

- All our senior confreres in Stony Point and Tampa
- Alejandro Acosta Lagaxio, nephew of Fr. Raúl M. Acosta Zunini, SDB
- José María Acosta Zunini, brother of Fr. Raúl M. Acosta Zunini, SDB
- Carlos Arredondo '52, Salesian High School alumnus and founder of its Math Leaders Program
- Fr. John Blanco, SDB
- Fr. Bruce Craig, SDB
- Jim Dolan, Salesian Cooperator
- Jo-Ann Donahue, Salesian Provincial Center Receptionist, New Rochelle, NY
- Fr. Dennis Donovan, SDB
- João dos Santos, brother of Fr. Tarcisio dos Santos, SDB
- Fr. Shiju James' mother, nephews, and nieces
- Julie Kirkland, Office Manager, St. John Bosco Parish, Harvey, LA
- Fr. Frank Kelly, SDB
- Dan Morales, former SDB
- Fr. John Nazzaro, SDB
- Marilyn Palka, Don Bosco Prep and Province Formation Office Secretary, Ramsey, NJ
- Ann Smith, Salesian Family, New Rochelle, NY
- Br. Henry Van der Velden, SDB



Sts. Patrick and Joseph
(Feast Days: March 17 and 19)



*“Nothing will be refused him [St. Joseph],
neither by Our Lady nor by his glorious son.”*

- St. Francis de Sales

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Salesians of Don Bosco, Canada and Eastern USA

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