



SALESIAN news

Canada & Eastern USA

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE PROVINCE OF ST. PHILIP THE APOSTLE



Three of the nine Salesian News stories highlighted in this year's Christmas Novena
Original photos courtesy of Ms. Kristen E. Beasley, Ms. Macie Weaver, and Fr. Tito Iannaccio, SDB

Join in Praying This Year's Christmas Novena with Us

By Ms. Julia St. Clair, Province Communications Director

(New Rochelle, NY – December 11) – This year's Christmas Novena begins on Monday, December 16. This year's Christmas Novena begins on Monday, December 16. For this year's novena, we will feature a different story of hope from *Salesian News*, along with a novena prayer, from next Monday through Christmas Eve. The novena prayer was taken from The Jubilee Prayer, written by Pope Francis. A special thank you to Amy Stockinger and Vicky Weekley, who collaborated with me on this year's Christmas Novena.



Tune into the province's [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) each day from December 16-24 and pray with us! Stories will be on Instagram, while posts will be on Facebook.

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Province News

Rest in Peace, Bro. James F. Wiegand, SDB

By Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

Early on the morning of December 8, a little after midnight, Bro. James Frank Wiegand, SDB, surrendered his soul to the Lord whom he had served faithfully for more than 91 years, including 70 as a professed Salesian brother. He had been transported the previous evening from Allendale (NJ) Senior Living to the Valley Hospital Emergency Room in Paramus, NJ, where he passed away. He had belonged to the Don Bosco Prep community since 2002.

Jim Wiegand was born on September 21, 1933, in Freeport, IL, the son of Aloysius and Faye Sunderland Wiegand. His father was a railroad



Bro. James F. "Jim" Wiegand, SDB
Photo by Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

conductor. The family also included Jim's younger sister Martha.

Jim became a member of Christ's family on November 12, 1933, baptized at Freeport's St. Joseph's Church. He was also confirmed there in 1944.

In his youth Jim was a fervent sports fan, rooting always for the Chicago White Sox—"yesterday, today, and tomorrow"—and for the Chicago Bulls after their founding in 1966. He starred in high school in basketball and baseball and was the starting tight end in football. He even got a tryout with the Chicago Cubs (who evidently did not sign him). As a teen, he decided that he wanted to become a coach.

Aiming to become a secondary school teacher, therefore, he began college at Illinois State University in Normal, IL, with a basketball scholarship (1951-1952). But his sister Martha's entering the Dominicans and his seeing the example of some religious brothers made him think about becoming a brother. Martha had taken the religious name Dominic Savio, and she suggested to Jim that he look at the Salesians because of his interest in teaching.

So Jim came to the Salesians at Don Bosco Tech in Paterson as a Son of Mary (an adult aspirant) on January 29, 1953. From his first encounter with the Salesians, he found what he described as "a form of spirituality which I had not witnessed before. The Salesians were more often in the field working, than in the chapel praying. When I inquired about this, I was told, 'Our Founder, Don Bosco, believed that work can be prayer!' And I noticed they went about doing their work with great cheerfulness." At DBT he found a solid family spirit among the brothers and other staff and was particularly guided by Fr. Joseph Perozzi, Bro. Mike Frazette, and the athletic director, Bill Kehoe, whom he regarded as his mentor in coaching.

The Kehoes, in fact, remained lifelong friends. Bill's daughter Jude Ann Coté testifies: "Bro. Jim truly walked in Don Bosco's shadow using reason, religion, and kindness with his boys." She adds:



Like Don Bosco, who used his juggling/gymnastic skills to attract and meet his boys where they were, Bro. Jim used the blessings of his athletic/coaching abilities. He saw Don Bosco as his model and sought opportunities to apply his system of reason, religion, and kindness to greet boys wherever they were (even a morning greeting in the cafeteria) with a desire to develop in them good character to bring into the world. Clothed in team gear or perfecting the physics behind shooting, Bro. Jim held fast to returning to the importance of the lesson of "the spirit vs. the ego," successfully using every opportunity to leave his message with us to pass on now as confreres, teachers, coaches, friends, and parents.



Br. Jim (left) during his time at Don Bosco Tech in 1958
Courtesy of Salesian Provincial Archives

Jim was admitted to St. Joseph's Novitiate in Newton in September 1953 and, a year later, made his first religious profession at Newton on September 8, 1954. He made perpetual profession at Newton on September 3, 1960.

Jim continued studies at Don Bosco College in Newton and earned a B.A. in humanities in 1957. At the same time, he had begun practical training at Don Bosco in Paterson, teaching physical education and coaching basketball and baseball. He remained at DBT for seven years and also served at summer camps at Camp Savio in West Milford, NJ, and Camp Don Bosco in East Barrington, NH, for six years. He always regarded his seven years at DBT as "golden years."

Transferred to Salesian High School in New Rochelle in 1961, he taught phys ed and coached basketball there until 1980 and also was campmaster during the summers. From 1974 to 1980 he was on the house council, and from 1970 to 1980 was a member of the province's coadjutor advisory board. He was elected many times to provincial chapters. At Salesian he was highly respected and highly successful as basketball coach,

amassing 353 wins, 13 league titles, and a state championship in 1976. According to a Don Bosco Prep student, Matt Stranzl, who looked deeply into Bro. Jim's career, "his teams played with tremendous discipline and selflessness; they were a reflection of their coach's personality off the court."

Four of Bro. Jim's players became 1,000-point scorers in college. Luis Brignone, '71, played for the Puerto Rican Olympic team in 1976 and was the first alumnus inducted into the school's athletic hall of fame. In 2008 Bro. Jim became the school's second hall of fame inductee. Another player, Mike Breen, '79, became a highly regarded sportscaster and was elected to the National Basketball Hall of Fame in 2021.

When Bro. Jim joined Salesian's hall of fame, the provincial, Fr. Jim Heuser, congratulated him as a "wholesome and friendly presence" among the young, offering "steady and helpful instruction" and "warm and positive encouragement." He said, "You teach the young lessons, not only for a game, but also for life."

The school's new gymnasium (2010) is named in honor of him.

He also became a pretty good tennis player and, late in his career, coached that sport, too.

Bro. Jim was assigned to Archbishop Shaw High School in Marrero in 1980. There he was athletic director and an administrative assistant. Without reliable public transportation on the West Bank, he had to learn to drive. For eight years he was also the Salesian community's treasurer.



*Br. Jim (left) during his time at Salesian High
Courtesy of Salesian Provincial Archives*

In the summer of 1984 Bro. Jim was posted to Birmingham, AL, to run a basketball program for the impoverished youngsters at Mark's Village, adjacent to the Salesians' Holy Rosary Church. Although this was quite a change for him, he served with enthusiasm, keeping the court in good condition, keeping games peaceable, coaching a bit, and always ready with guidance (including for the present writer, his assistant that summer).

Another change came in 2000, a two-year posting to the Salesian Boys & Girls Club in East Boston as a youth minister and game room assistant. He also managed to do a little coaching at Savio Prep.

2002 brought him to his last Salesian community, Don Bosco Prep in Ramsey, where he assisted with some coaching (basketball and tennis), was assistant athletic director, moderated the cafeteria, and was known to many of the students "as a kind sage who greets [them] in the morning as they walk between classes." Matt Stranzl, himself a basketball player, described Bro. Jim as a "a living legend amongst all the basketball players in the program. Known affectionately by many as 'The Shot Doctor,' he can be found anywhere in the gym helping all players, ranging from wide-eyed freshmen to well-established senior starters." One of the Bosco coaches alleged that Bro. Jim knew more about shooting a basketball than a lot of NBA coaches.

Weakened health obliged Bro. Jim to enter assisted living in Allendale in January 2020. He returned to the Prep whenever he could for celebrations or short visits and happily celebrated his 90th birthday there with a big party in the cafeteria.

His last director at Don Bosco, Fr. Abe Feliciano, praised his apostolic character:

Bro. Jim never let his physical limitations diminish his zeal, interest, or connection to the Salesian mission at Don Bosco Prep. He was a regular presence at the home basketball games, appearing courtside with his walker, cheering on the Ironmen and offering shooting tips at every turn. Every year, he prepared his "proper shooting technique" packet for every member of the varsity basketball team. In the spring, he would request the roster of the varsity baseball team and write a personalized note to each player. He read the local sports page cover-to-cover and kept up on all of Don Bosco Prep's teams, always offering encouragement and suggestions for how they could "come out on top" and win it all. While his declining health caused him to be physically absent from the campus, his heart, mind, and prayers were ever-present.

When Bro. Jim celebrated his 50th anniversary of profession, he wrote that "the brother's vocation allows presence [among the young] in a variety of ways." He especially liked the "Salesian concept in education—bring reason, religion and kindness" and assisting young people "with a smile." The "Salesian model of



Br. Jim juggles a volleyball.
Courtesy of Salesian Provincial Archives

interior life—work is prayer” was a great gift to him, he said, and he was to live his life as a gift of God with joy each day. He concluded, “Some great men have helped me over these 60 years—and I am very grateful.”

Bro. Jim made an impact on a spread of Salesians in their practical training at Salesian, including several who eventually left the Society. One, Bob Breault, in 1961-1962 found in him: *a man who exemplified the image of an American Don Bosco. I served my first year of tirocinium at Salesian High in New Rochelle, and Jim allowed me to coach the freshman basketball team there. I remember his insistence on shooting skills, but especially his ability to marry athletics with religion. It seemed to say that what goes for playing well goes for living well. The world became a bit better for Jim’s life. May we all live as Jim did.*

Jack Hudak came to Salesian for practical training almost a decade later and found a great coach in Bro. Jim: *When I was at Salesian HS New Rochelle, I was the athletic director during the 1971-72 school year. That year Bro. Jim with Lou*

Brignone, an outstanding player, along with other very good players won the Thruway League championship. Since there were no other takers for the AD position, I volunteered or was asked to serve as AD. With Bro. Jim’s invaluable support, all the games through all sports went on without a hitch.

Bro. Jim was not only an outstanding coach but, more important, he was concerned about the well-being of the student athletes and of all students. Athletics and PE were a means for Bro. Jim to carry on the work of Don Bosco through religion, reason, and kindness. I highly valued his friendship during my stay and after Salesian HS.

Bob Ferrara came to Salesian still later and kept up a friendship with Bro. Jim. He was one of Brother’s visitors at the Allendale assisted living. He writes: **Bro. Jim was a “good and faithful servant,” a great Salesian, and a phenomenal basketball coach! He personified dedication and meticulous detail to Don Bosco's Preventive System of reason, religion, and kindness as being his educative mantra. During our visits he would eventually refer back to these ideals no matter what we were talking about. They lived in his soul! I’m very glad that I caught up and had meaningful time with him. He thanked me for the visits. I thank him for his life!**

Bro. Jim is survived by his sister, Sister Martha Wiegand, O.P., of Muskego, WI. They visited each other often in their later years, and whenever they spoke by phone, they included prayer.

Bro. Jim’s funeral will take place at the Marian Shrine Chapel in Stony Point, NY, on Friday, December 13. The wake and visitation are from 1:00 to 6:45 p.m., followed by the Mass of Christian Burial at 7:00 p.m. He will be interred the following day at the Salesian Cemetery in Goshen, NY, at 10:00 a.m.



Three club members help in the kitchen for the pasta dinner.
Photo by Mrs. Anita Belmonte,
Marketing Director, Salesian Boys and Girls Club

East Boston: Club Celebrates Annual Pasta Dinner

By Bro. Bob Metell, SDB

(East Boston, MA – December 11) – Late last month, the Salesian Boys and Girls Club celebrated its annual pasta dinner. It is a yearly event that provides a time for the East Boston neighborhood to come and enjoy a delicious pasta dinner, win some raffle prizes, and meet club members and staff. A volunteer team of club members came together as greeters, welcoming guests and bringing them into the club’s snack area. A group of club members waited at the tables and served the meals. There was a wide range of raffle prizes for adults and youth.

The pasta dinner is more than a fund-raising event; it provides an opportunity for families to come together and greet one another. At the Club, our primary focus is Don Bosco’s family spirit. We attempt to make the majority of our fundraising events opportunities to build a community spirit and provide families with time to relax and enjoy each other.

We are now in the second week of Advent, a time of preparation for the the arrival of the Christ Child. As we prepare for Christmas, let us not forget the less fortunate. Christ came as a “beacon of hope and light.” In the craziness of the world that at times seems to be “hopeless and dark,” let us be beacons of light and hope to each other.



Etobicoke: Welcoming New Salesian Cooperators

**By Mrs. Rosina Di Felice,
Salesian Cooperator**

(Etobicoke, ON – December 11) – On Sunday, December 8, the Association of Salesian Cooperators in Canada rejoiced at the induction of two new Salesian Cooperators, Boban and Luna Mathew, of the Mary Help of Christians Centre in Etobicoke. Following two years of preparation and instruction provided by delegate Sr. Alphonsine Roy, FMA; local coordinator John Lopes; and formator Rosina Di Felice, Boban and Luna made their promise at the 11:00 a.m. Mass at St. Benedict Church.

Salesian director, Fr. John Puntino, presided at the Mass, and Fr. John Mariapragasam, SDB, concelebrated. The rite was witnessed by fellow Cooperators, family, friends, and the parish community.



*Fr. John Puntino, SDB; Luna Mathew, Salesian Cooperator;
Sr. Alphonsine Roy, FMA; Boban Mathew, Salesian Cooperator;
and Fr. John Louis Mariapragasam, SDB
Photo by Mrs. Rosina Di Felice*



*Part of Eagles' win advertisement
Courtesy of Ms. Nicole Perque*

Marrero: Shaw Eagles Celebrate Superdome Win

**By Ms. Nicole Perque,
Coordinator of Advancement,
Archbishop Shaw High School**

(Marrero, LA – December 11) – Archbishop Shaw High School's varsity football team recently won an exciting game in the Louisiana Superdome. This has ranked them first in the 2024 LHSAA Division II (Select) Football Championships.

What an exciting milestone for Archbishop Shaw High School! It's inspiring to see the dedication and spirit of the Salesian young men, in both their athletic achievements and character off the field. Best of luck to the team as they play for the state title!



*Fr. Eddie Chinchá, SDB (second from left) and
members of “Nueva Vida en Cristo”
Courtesy of Fr. Eddie Chinchá, SDB*

Port Chester: “Nueva Vida en Cristo” Visits Manhattan

By Fr. Eddie Chinchá, SDB


(Port Chester, NY – December 11) – This past weekend, St. John Bosco Parish's young adult group “Nueva Vida en Cristo” made a short trip to Manhattan to be part of Catholic Underground's monthly gathering. By having attended and participated in this prayer service, we hope to learn to better animate our own monthly adoration nights here in Port Chester.

We are blessed to have such a committed group of young adults who are excited to bring back what they learn from other places and further enrich our parish's faith life.




After the adoration service finished, we warmed ourselves up with some noodle soup before we returned home.

Upcoming Events


 *Embraced by God* AND
The North American Salesian Network (NASN)

PRESENT

 **The 3rd Annual Fr. John Graden,
O.S.F.S. Memorial Lecture**

Thursday, 12/12/24 @ 8:00PM (EST)

Video available at: www.embracedbygod.org
www.salesiannetwork.org
www.youtube.com/@embracedbygod5629
www.facebook.com/EmbracedByGodNY
www.facebook.com/NorthAmericanSalesianNetwork

**“Abandoned to Grace: Abiding Momently with
Jesus in the Way of Saint Francis de Sales”**
Presented by Andrew Michel, MD 

To continue the inspirational work of Father Graden,
Embraced by God has established an annual donation fund.
Please visit EmbracedByGod.org/Giving/ to make a contribution.

Courtesy of Fr. John Puntino, SDB



Courtesy of Free for Canva Pro

NASN’s Third Annual Fr. John Graden, OSFS, Memorial Lecture

Watch the lecture tonight on
www.salesiannetwork.org at 8:00 p.m. EST!

Walk the Camino Next May

Men ages 18 and over are invited to walk the Camino de Santiago with the Salesians in 2025. It’ll take place from May 15-25, 2025 (in nearly five months), via the Portuguese Way.

Apply today! Questions? Email vocations@salesians.org.

Dec. 12: NASN’s Third Annual Fr. John Graden, OSFS, Memorial Lecture (Online)

Dec. 15: Deadline to register for the Salesian Family Spirituality Days in Turin, Italy

Dec. 28: Last day to register for St. John Bosco’s
Salesian Family History and Animation Course, Pt. II

Jan. 3-4: St. John Bosco’s Salesian Family History and Animation Course, Pt. II
(Orange, NJ, and Online)

Jan. 31 – Feb. 2: Men’s Discernment Weekend (Tampa, FL)

Need a date added? No problem! Contact us at communications@salesians.org.



*Bro. Jim (center) during his induction into Salesian High's Athletic Hall of Fame
Photo by Louis Calvelli*



*Suzanne Platt
Courtesy of Mr. Adam Rudin, SLM Program Director*

Weekly Prayer
for December 12-18, 2024

Let us all pray for **Suzanne Platt**, an SLM who is at Don Bosco Dalat in Dalat, Vietnam.



Birthdays

- December 13:** Bro. Francis Nguyen
- December 17:** Fr. Stephen Ryan
- December 18:** Fr. Mark Hyde
- December 18:** Bro. Donald Caldwell
- December 20:** Fr. Dennis Hartigan
- December 22:** Fr. Michael Mendl
- December 25:** Fr. Gabriel Stawowy



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
 - Jacob Anitra**, grandnephew of Bro. Tom Sweeney, SDB
 - Fr. Javier Aracil, SDB**
 - Fr. John Blanco, SDB**
 - Fr. Bill Bucciferro, SDB**
 - Fr. Bruce Craig, SDB**
 - Jo-Ann Donahue**, Salesian Provincial Center Receptionist,
New Rochelle, NY
 - Claudia Gonzales**, Salesian Cooperator, Port Chester, NY
 - Fr. Frank Kelly, SDB**
 - Bro. George Marquis, SDB**
 - John Myler**, former SDB
 - Fr. Georges Parent, SDB**
 - Bro. Sal Sammarco, SDB**
 - Janine Serio Durso**, sister of Fr. John Serio, SDB
 - Robert Serio**, nephew of Fr. John Serio, SDB
 - Bro. Henry Van der Velden, SDB**

Deceased

- Bro. Jim Wiegand, SDB**



*“The secret of secrets in prayer
is to follow attractions in simplicity of heart.”*
- St. Francis de Sales

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