



BOSCO NEWS

VOLUME 4 | ISSUE 4 | APRIL 30, 2013



Salesians of Don Bosco | Province of St. Philip the Apostle | Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry
Signs and Bearers of God's Love for the Young and the Poor
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Salesians of Don Bosco
Province of St. Philip the Apostle
Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry
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Tell us what's happening in your neck of the woods!
Submit your stories and reflections for the next
BoscoNews to bosconews@salesianym.com.

SPRING CLEANING

Spring started back in March and is still going on until the middle of June. This is a season during which we can prepare ourselves for a more peaceful time of year: summer. Spring cleaning is referred to as the literal cleaning of one's home. We have to make sure everything is clean, dirt-less, and any trash we may have, we throw away. It's a time when we can get rid of everything we don't need anymore, so we can start fresh. This is almost

like a new year of life. We may be able to get time to clean our homes, but we must also think about cleansing our minds. The new year started just a few months back, and for most of us teens, our year technically started in September. We're nearing the end of another academic year, which for the most part, might have been filled with tons of homework, quizzes, tests, and stress. Though this may have been an issue this past year, we must not lose touch of Jesus.

Allison Chicoma, '13
Mary Help of Christians Acad.
North Haledon, NJ



My faith this year has felt stronger than ever, especially after a great experience I had on a Leadership retreat. This retreat consisted of youth from different Salesian schools gathered in one place to reconnect their relationship with God. There was so much I learned and realized about my life on this retreat, that my relationship with God grew stronger than before. I met some extraordinary members of the Salesian community. I learned that as Salesians we are a family, and we always have each other's backs. This support system with God and my Salesian family is what has kept me going this past year. True, there have been times I was tempted to fall again, and sometimes I did, but I was able to get back up because I knew that I wasn't alone and that God was always there extending his hand out to me.

Now that spring is here, I have even more motivation to get things done and to be optimistic and hopeful for graduation, summer, and college. The knowledge and feeling that God is here, by my side, encourages me to look forward to the positive outcomes that lie ahead. We, as Salesians, should also look forward with an optimistic view. My outlook on life has truly strengthened my relationship with my family, friends, and classmates because even if they are down and don't know what to do, I remind them that they're not alone. God is always there, and when you seek for His help, He won't let you down. The people who have witnessed my faith have been encouraged to continue along their own faith journeys, and they have been grateful for the perspective I've helped them to have. My family tells me of how proud they are of me because of how my faith has helped sculpt the person I am today. I am grateful, myself, for everyone who has supported me throughout my whole life; they have given me encouragement to live to the best of my potential, and with God in my life, that encouragement magnifies ten times more!

Remember that it's still spring, and you have time to cleanse everything physically, mentally, and spiritually. Remember that summer is coming and you have a ton of years ahead of you filled with new experiences and new people to share memories with you. Most importantly, remember that God is with you, and He will always be by your side for anything that you need.

GREETINGS OF HOPE FROM SOUTH SUDAN



Luke Ebner
Salesian Lay Missioner
South Sudan

Luke is currently serving as a Salesian Lay Missioner, living and working in Juba, South Sudan

"It's best to not confuse optimism with hope. Optimism is a psychological attitude towards life. Hope goes further. It is an anchor that one hurls towards the future, it's what lets you pull on the line and reach what you're aiming for and head in the right direction. Hope is also theological: God is there, too."

What an awesome quote Pope Frances gives us to contemplate as Salesians! Having hope allows us to make a difference in the lives of so many poor and young people across the world. It is because of hope in the young people that allow us as Salesians to work so hard and do what we do, because we know the work we are doing allows hope for the future and makes the next day

a little better for the young person in front of us. We use so much energy and time for the children because we know in our hearts that the lives of the young people, and thus the world as a whole, are changed because of our actions. This hope is reciprocated, too, as the children provide us with so much hope. Every time one of my struggling students finally understands a part of speech or pronounces a word correctly after many attempts, I am filled with hope. Every time one of my students walks for 5 hours a day to come to school so they can know more than they knew yesterday, I am filled with hope. Hope that provides energy, inspiration, and joy.

Most of all, our hope comes from Jesus and His resurrection. There are countless examples in the Gospels about the impact Jesus had on many of the forgotten, sinful, crippled, young, and lost. The miracles He performed and the compassion He had towards the least of His brothers, are filled with hope. He is the reason we have hope in ourselves and in the world, and because of that we can instill hope in the young and poor of this beautiful world. He has hope in us and in others when nobody else does. Because of that, we need to have hope in those we serve when nobody else on this Earth does.



FOUR TIPS TO BE OPTIMISTIC

If you're already a person who jumps into projects with boundless energy, is always smiling and enthusiastic, and is constantly being told to slow down—this reflection is not for you. Obviously, you have something that is working for you, so keep it up and thank God for it!

I wanted to share a little bit with those of you who may be struggling to stay positive and get things done. Maybe you're feeling overwhelmed and you lack some of the spark you have had in the past. Optimism may be something that comes more naturally to some than others, but I don't think it's ever constant; our supply varies at different moments in our lives.

So how can we be more optimistic and more hopeful? After all, we're trying to share Jesus Christ and our Salesian Spirituality in as joyful a way as we can. When we're down, how can we best lift ourselves and others up?

Before beginning my ministry at Don Bosco Cristo Rey High School, I was reflecting about what things I would need to focus on in order to do my best. I came up with 4 P's: Prayer, People, Planning, and Patience. By keeping these things in mind, you may be able to be more optimistic in your work.

First, there's prayer. Without it, we can do nothing. Intellectually, we know this. In practice, we don't always live it. I will more often than not wrestle with a problem and get frustrated about situations without taking them to prayer. This is a sure path to pessimism. When I relax a little, let go, and let God direct my thinking, I am much more confident and optimistic.

A second key to optimism: people. If you're like me, sometimes being with too many people can be draining. But on the flip side, when we work too long in a lonely office by ourselves, we can get very discouraged. Getting to know people, building positive relationships, and taking the time to enjoy being with people is an effective antidote to discouragement.

A third help is planning. Take some time to look ahead. Doing things without recollecting ourselves, or at the last minute, can drain our optimism quickly. It was said of Don Bosco that he did a million things, but yet never seemed rushed.

Being patient with ourselves and others can also help us to be optimistic. Remember the patience of Jesus. He was the greatest of teachers and his students were still pretty dense. Should we expect much of a difference as we try to teach and learn? There's no reason to get down. God is in charge.

The world is overwhelmed with difficulty. Many times we feel like we're in the same boat. But Jesus is calmly sleeping. Others are counting on us to bring some optimism, peace, and tranquility into their turbulent lives. May God and Mary help us to do just that.



Fr. Mike Leschinsky, SDB
Coordinator for Youth Ministry
Don Bosco Cristo Rey HS
Takoma Park, MD

Fr. Mike is in his first year as the Coordinator for Youth Ministry at DBCR, our province's youngest school. He's also one of our newest priests – he was ordained in July 2011!

HOPE TO PERSEVERE



As we bring to a close the Easter season, it is good to reflect upon the virtue of hope and the concept of optimism. The joy of the Resurrection and the hope that it stirs in us is most pronounced during these weeks. The hope and optimism of Easter permeated Don Bosco's life, and it is worthwhile for us to consider how to allow these two qualities to animate our lives.

Justin Matelski
Theology Department Chair
Archbishop Shaw High School
Marrero, LA

Justin isn't just the chair of Shaw's Theology Department, but he's also a very proud husband and father (and Packers fan!)

As members of the Salesian Family, we can be at times accused of having an insatiable optimism. Seeing the best in people or the bright side of a difficult situation is what we do. This spirit of optimism comes to us from the example of Don Bosco, who saw dignity and goodness in the young men of Turin where others saw only unwashed misfits, street urchins and blight upon society. As those boys were given love, Don Bosco could see them grow, both in their virtues as well as in their stature.

But optimism alone is not what made the Oratory a reality. Optimism by itself says "because of the evidence, I can safely assume that if we keep doing things the way we are, things will get better." No, Don Bosco could not be sustained by simple optimism. He couldn't just smile when facing difficulties and use resources he had to take care of them. To do what he did, hope was needed.

Hope is the virtue by which we can look at a situation, recognize all the obstacles and difficulties in our path, see that the evidence points contrary to our desired outcome, and still work courageously towards our goal. Hope is what Don Bosco had. If it seemed they would run out of food, God moved the heart of a kindly baker. If it seemed like they had nowhere to turn, God provided Valdocco.

As we return to Ordinary time, we in the Salesian family have much to be optimistic about and much to be hopeful for. Christ is risen, and that fact should give us hope to tackle even the tasks that seem insurmountable. In our Ministry, we should be optimistic about the positives we see in our student's grades or attitudes. When it comes to our difficult moments, lesson planning or dealing with a student who is acting out, let us pray that God will grant us the hope we need to persevere.



HEADING TOWARDS GOSPEL ROADS

I'm Bernie Pontillo, and I'm the director of the Gospel Roads II program on Long Island this year. In the beginning of April, all of the GR directors met in South Orange to discuss the Gospel Roads programs for this year. For the Long Island crew, that meant a quick 90-minute drive to the Salesian House. The meeting hit all of the major topics that organizers would be worried about – what to do in a crisis, how to plan the retreat, budgets (my favorite), etc. We also had time to spend with the other directors to share thoughts, make new friends, and renew old friendships. It's amazing how comfortable you can feel around people you don't know that well when you all have common ground. I can tell you that all of the programs will be amazing!

I've always liked the Gospel Roads precept – service to God by serving others. Sometimes that means being open to new experiences and stepping out of one's comfort zone. But the experience will enrich you, and sometimes show you the path God has for you.

That's what led me to start GR Long Island. My first Gospel Roads experience was only last year, when I attended GR-I in Washington, DC. From day one, I was hooked. When I returned to New York, I was told that a Gospel Roads on Long Island "could not be done." They (the proverbial "they") listed a bunch of reasons why GR on Long Island was impossible. Yet here we are, a year later, and we're having a Gospel Roads! The path hasn't always been smooth, but with God's help, it has all worked out. It only goes to prove what Jesus said: "with God, all things are possible."

We don't always know what God has planned for us. But if we say yes to His plan and follow Him, something wondrous can happen. I never expected to be leading a Gospel Roads program. But here I am! If things turn out half as good as my journey has been so far, it's going to be awesome. Difficult at times, but well worth the journey. Like the band MercyMe says, "I can only imagine."



Bernie Pontillo
Youth Ministry Team
St. Thomas More Youth Group
Hauppauge, NY

Bernie is part of the Youth Ministry team at St. Thomas More Church in Hauppauge, NY. He will be the director of Gospel Roads II: Long Island this summer and spends a lot of his free time traveling.

Gospel Roads Summer 2013

Gospel Roads I

(intended for high school students)

New Orleans, LA June 15-22

Washington, DC July 6-13

Tampa, FL July 6-13

Toronto, ON * July 20-27

Stony Point, NY August 4-10

Gospel Roads II

(intended for youth & young adults, 18 and over)

Long Island, NY June 8-15

Port Chester, NY June 22-29

Chicago, IL August 11-18

For more, visit: www.gospelroads.org

* Please note, GR Toronto is limited to Canadians only *



SALESIAN YOUTH MINISTRY SEMINAR



April Hoffman
Aspirant
Salesian Sisters

April is in her first year of preparation as an Aspirant, studying to become a Salesian Sister. She is living and studying in community with the Sisters at Mary Help of Christians Academy in North Haledon, NJ

As I continue to learn about the Salesian charism and pedagogy of Don Bosco, I am filled with hope and confidence. Hope that like those who've gone before me, I too will become a true Salesian educator working to bring Christ to the young, and the young to Christ. I'm confident because I have studied education and worked with youth, and I've seen many of Don Bosco's strategies and techniques applied and witnessed their success.

While attending the seminar on Salesian Youth Ministry, we first learned about Salesian Formation. We discussed the necessity of creating a safe, welcoming, fun environment where young people feel at home and are encouraged to be the best version of themselves. How true this is in all the Salesian environments I've had the opportunity to be a part of! Whether it's kids taking swimming lessons at camp, playing the piano at a school concert, playing 4-square or working on a group project in class, they are engaged and joyful.

We continue to bring this message of hope and joy to the young in order to help them reach the goal of becoming upright citizens and good Christians. One way we can do this is through Salesian Accompaniment; that is, walking with the young people along their journey of life. Although this concept was introduced to me at the seminar, I've seen it in action. The trust and rapport built with the young through the Salesian presence in our schools, retreat centers and oratories, lends itself to this type of relationship. The youth can see us, not as mentors, directors or guides, but truly friends who can share in their trials and triumphs and help them process through the situations and challenges of daily life.

This process of accompaniment makes us vulnerable and stretches us as Salesians to live this ministry as a way of life: to be truthful and compassionate, to believe in the goodness of every person, to be truly present in the moment, to listen openly and to be available. Through our positive and willing daily example, the youth encounter friends who will walk with them. As Jean Marie Petitclerc says, "Joy seems to be the essential component of a Salesian educational climate." Knowing that we are striving for holiness and that it is possible for each one of us, we have every reason to be joyful and optimistic.



Left: **Fr. John Roche prepares.**

Below: **Fr. John Roche during his presentation of Accompaniment**

Right: **Fr. John Serio speaks on Formation**



THE BIRDS AND THE BEES

“Love is in the air.” This captivating cliché was a major through-point of Christopher West’s presentation at St. Elizabeth’s Parish in Wyckoff last Tuesday, but the presentation was anything but over-used or trite. If anything, it was the unsung hymn of the goodness of our sexuality.

The “love in the air” comment was more bluntly described as the reality of plant-love-making, which he expounded upon after we had all inhaled a deep breath of pollen. Some of us choked a bit as we realized that the flowers ornamenting the sacred space of the church were actually plant reproductive organs. But after this shock subsided, the beauty of his talk settled into the heart of every audience member as West spoke about the vitality of our spiritual and human desires. West delivered the good news that we are creatures of longing who were created to experience eternal bliss. I don’t know about you, but I think this is very good news! If ever there were a reason to be optimistic – this would be it.

The presentation was based on Blessed John Paul II’s Theology of the Body, as made more accessible through West’s recent book, *Fill These Hearts: God, Sex and the Universal Longing*. The structure of his discussion broke down into three parts: desire, design and destiny. This is my attempt at explaining the deep theological insights succinctly: the Lord created us with the inherent design to ache (physically and spiritually) for fulfillment -- to love and to be loved. But as the philosopher Mick Jagger points out in his song, we “can’t get no satisfaction” –nothing on Earth can actually fill our longing. It is only when we exist completely in the presence of God that we can be filled to our capacity. This state of existence, of course, is Heaven. And Heaven is our rightful destiny.

But how do we arrive in the eternal wellspring of ultimate bliss—the fulfillment of our deepest longings? Human beings ask this question every day. Usually in less words. West points out that “desire has a trajectory. Wherever we aim it, that’s where we will ultimately arrive.” Picture cupid, the winged cherub pulling back his loaded bow string, aiming his pointed arrow carefully. He is meant to represent “Eros” – and whatever the arrow is aimed at becomes the entity of desire – the specter of intimate love. This begs the question: where are we aiming? With whom or what are we falling in love? Where do we want to end up?

As spring continues to blossom, ducklings emerge from their eggshells, and the earth in general abounds with fertility and the continuation for the proverbial “circle of life,” – let’s be reminded that we are allowed to fall in love with the Author of Love, Himself; who, if we continue to keep in our foresight as the object of our aim – will grant us the satisfaction we were created to desire, and that Mick Jagger continues to long for.



Ms. Rachael Pineiro
Salesian Domestic Volunteer
North Haledon, NJ

As a Domestic Volunteer, Rachel serves as part of the Youth Ministry team at MHCA. She also serves as an intern at the Province Youth Ministry Office, where she helps with retreats and programs, among many other things!

THE GOOD NIGHT A VICTORY YET TO BE CELEBRATED



Fr. Abraham Feliciano, SDB
Province Delegate for
Youth Ministry

The month of April can and often is viewed as a month full of joy, hope, and optimism. In addition to signaling the arrival of spring, and the hastening approach of summer vacation, as people of faith, it is a time of celebration. Easter always passes through April, and frequently begins in the very same month. So, along with the blooming of flowers, increasing daylight, and the arrival of the baseball season, we rejoice because, “Christ is

risen!” Yet, this particular April, our joy and celebration was interrupted, pierced, and for some, altogether crushed. On Monday, April 15th, the city of Boston and over 130 people were wounded, some mortally, due to a horrible act of violence. Images would flash across the

news stations of several of the victims, particularly of the youngest of them all to die, Martin Richard, who was all of eight years old. His mother Denise suffered a severe brain injury and his youngest sister, Jane, will now begin to learn at the tender age of six years old how to live her life with only one leg. The violence and loss of life would continue with the death of MIT Police Officer Sean A. Collier, as well as the death of the older of the two suspects, Tamerlan Tsarnaev. Even superficial attention to these events could lead some of us to the conclusion that evil is winning the war against good, or at the very least—is gaining ground. Some might begin to wonder whether or not peace, love, and hope are more akin to fool’s gold than worthwhile Gospel values. In short, such heinous acts of evil, not only bring us sadness, if permitted they can also lead us to despair, as if Good Friday had never ended.

Nonetheless, despair does not have to be the end result, just as the Crucifixion was not the last word. As Christian disciples, particularly Salesian disciples, while we do not have answers for all of the questions that arise from the tragedies of life, we are not helpless. We have a response to despair and to evil itself: optimism rooted in faith. As people of faith, we are convinced that evil is not stronger than good, because we know that God and his love are more powerful than human weakness, sin and death. As our Holy Father, Pope Francis stated in his Easter Sunday address:

What does it mean that Jesus is risen? It means that the love of God is stronger than evil and death itself; it means that the love of God can transform our lives and let those desert places in our hearts bloom. The love of God can do this! ... This is what Easter is: it is the exodus, the passage of human beings from slavery to sin and evil to the freedom of love and goodness. Because God is life, life alone, and we are his glory.

The challenge for us as disciples is not for us to believe that good will prevail over evil. The challenge for us is to realize that evil has already lost! The challenge for us is to live as a people who are victorious, because our King, our Messiah, our Savior, Jesus Christ has triumphed once and for all. It is left to us, as disciples to accept, embrace, and live this victory.

How do we live this victory, in the face of seemingly relentless evil? First, by not succumbing to it. One of the simplest and most formidable immediate responses to the bombing was issued by Michael Groffenberger, of the nation’s second oldest jewelry store, Shreve, Crump and Low, located just a few blocks from the site of the explosions. In addition, to unfurling an American flag on their balcony he [Michael] asked all of his employees to return to work the day following the bombings as they normally would, in direct defiance of the terror that had gripped the city. As he stated,

***We don’t allow things to change the very way we live.
If we do, that’s when they’ve won. That’s when the evildoers have won.***

It is true that evil can do us very real, physical harm, and it would be foolish to pretend otherwise. But, the only harm that evil can do to our spirit and our soul is that which we allow it. Against our will strengthened by the Holy Spirit, evil is pathetic; and in the light of our souls in a state of grace--evil shudders.

Secondly, we live Christ's victory by resisting evil's sway, but more importantly, by exercising and spreading the power of good. Jesus has already assured us that good in this world will overcome evil:

And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)

This would indicate that as disciples, we are already well equipped to not only face or resist evil, but to defeat it. Each and every act of kindness, compassion, and charity, especially in the face of aggression, selfishness, and hatred, is a triumph of the power of God's love over the darkness that is sin. As St. Paul says:

Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good. (Roman 12:21)

All of the men and women who rushed to the aid of the bombing victims, even in the face of the uncertainty of their own safety, manifested the greater power of good, even in the midst of the horror of cowardly evil.

While we know that the passage of time and the love of God will eventually bring healing to all the lives touched by the bombings, we are also starkly aware that this is neither the first nor the last demonstration of evil's desperate attempt to shake our faith, and to squash our optimism. Yet, the very fact that evil's adherents go to such lengths to drag us into the pit of despair, is a glaring sign of their frailty. As our spiritual father, St. John Bosco reminds us:

Have the courage of your faith and your convictions. Do not fear: God is with his Church all days until the end of the world. It is up to the wicked to tremble in front of the good, not the other way around. (Exhortation of Don Bosco to the Salesians)

As we continue our Easter celebration, and journey towards our Eternal Easter with our Champion, Jesus in Heaven, let us not be discouraged by the fragility of humanity or the specter of evil. Instead, let us live as optimistic people of faith, convinced that our victory has already been assured. Our call and responsibility in the interim, is to invite and lead as many others as possible to the victory party that awaits us in Heaven.

The Salesian "Good Night" is a tradition begun by St. John Bosco's mother, Margaret Occhiena Bosco during her time assisting her son in the very first Salesian Oratory. Practiced throughout the Salesian World today, the "Good Night" is a brief thought or message usually shared at the end of the day or at the conclusion of a Salesian gathering. Its purpose is to not only provide "food for thought", but also to offer the Salesian Family a focus, a theme, or a point of reference that assists in discovering the deeper meaning of the day's activities and events. It is a way to become more sensitized to God's action in our daily lives. By Don Bosco's own definition, the Good Night was the "key to good moral conduct, to the good running of the house, and to success in the work of education".

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE SALESIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT

Salesian Family Day at Six Flags

May 11, 2013 | Jackson, NJ

*Join your Salesian Family for a day in the park
full of faith, fun, fellowship, and food!*

For more, visit: salesianym.com/salFamilyDay.html

Young Adult Retreat

North: May 17-19, 2013 | Stony Point, NY

South: May 24-26, 2013 | Tampa, FL

Weekend retreat for young adults 18-23, out of high school for one year!

For more, visit: salesianym.com/yar.html

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