



BOSCO NEWS

VOLUME 4 | ISSUE 7 | SEPTEMBER 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
www.salesianym.com

BOSCONEWS

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 7
SEPTEMBER 2013

Salesians of Don Bosco
Province of St. Philip the Apostle
Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry
148 E Main Street, New Rochelle, NY 10802
www.salesianym.com
bosconews@salesianym.com

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2-17 **Gospel Roads Adventures**
- 18-21 **World Youth Day in Rio**
- 22-23 **The Good Night**
- 24 **Upcoming Events**

WE'VE MOVED!



The Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry
has relocated to the Provincial Offices
in New Rochelle, New York!

Our New Address is:
148 Main Street, New Rochelle, NY 10801

Our Mailing address is:
PO Box 639, New Rochelle, NY 10802

On the cover: The Salesian Youth Movement Delegation
in front of Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro,
Brazil

Tell us what's happening in your neck of the woods!
Submit your stories and reflections for the next
BoscoNews to bosconews@salesianym.com.



WALKING THE GOSPEL ROADS IN NEW ORLEANS

This summer, right after my junior year of high school ended, I was lucky enough to be afforded the opportunity to go down to New Orleans, Louisiana for the Salesian Gospel Roads program. Going down to the retreat, I had an open mind and an open heart about what was going to happen in the following week, however I could not have possibly predicted the way the experiences we shared as a group would affect me.

The person that made the greatest impact on me was a woman named Joanne. Joanne was an older woman that we met at the New Directions Adult Day Care facility. Joanne had some severe mental as well as physical disabilities, both of which made it difficult to initially connect with her, mainly because she had a hard time talking and was not able to get up and move about to join in our activities. However, as lunch came around, I was asked to help feed Joanne her food that was pureed to make it easier for her to eat. While I was feeding her lunch, I realized this was a lady that I was going to spend a bit of my time with that day. I was immediately drawn to her from that point on.

As the day progressed, the helpers brought out a Wii and started bowling with some of the clients. At first, Joanne was a bit hesitant and didn't seem to have any desire to play, but after some encouragement and my offer to help her, I managed to get Joanne to play. We started out a bit slow, but as we played we started to get a bit better -- and for one frame, with my help, we bowled a strike.

Once Joanne saw that we had knocked over all of the pins, she had a look on her face that I cannot even begin to explain. She was beyond excited, with one of the biggest smiles I had ever seen on her face. She kept saying "I love you!" At this point, I started to realize that many of the clients at the day care center were very similar to small children. Some of the most basic, seemingly inconsequential tasks or achievements could bring such an enormous amount of joy to a person, like Joanne with the strike. It was able to make her day.

Cormac Malley

Don Bosco Prep High School
Class of 2014
Ramsey, NJ



Continued on next page →



WALKING THE GOSPEL ROADS IN NEW ORLEANS

Joanne truly left a lasting impression on me; I will never forget the sorrow that I felt when I heard her name called for the bus ride home. I knew then that I would probably never get a chance to meet her again in my life, and I can honestly say that I got choked up about it. As I look back on it now, the clients at the New Directions Adult Day Care facility truly helped me to see the face of Jesus because they had so much innocence and just an overwhelming amount of joy and good spirits about them.

In the Bible, Jesus says, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these" (Matt 19:14). I really believe that this group of clients had that childlike innocence about them that we should all try to imitate. I also feel that I have to mention the men and women who worked at the day care full-time, because I have never met people that had more patience and kindness in my life. They were truly amazing and a real inspiration for the participants of Gospel Roads, showing us how to treat our fellow man and how to be a good Catholic.

I will always remember my week walking the Gospel Road in New Orleans, and I will most definitely never forget my friend Joanne.



GOSPEL ROADS I: WASHINGTON, D.C.



During my Gospel Roads week, I saw God move in tremendous ways in the youth as well as my own heart. In order to better explain, allow me to give you a little background about myself.

I am a Catholic high school Theology teacher in his mid-20's from Birmingham, AL. Having attained a Master's Degree in Theology, I was familiar with St. John Bosco and the Salesians,

Christopher Ducote Jr.
Teacher

John Carroll Catholic High School
Birmingham, AL

but that was about the extent of it. I worked many of my college summers at a Catholic camp in Georgia run by Life Teen, so I was familiar with the idea of a "summer camp" and "service week", but I had never been on a Gospel Roads before. I agreed to attend namely because

my group of teens (6 students from my school) could not have gone otherwise. As an individual, and as a teacher, I could not fathom denying the students the opportunity to increase their faith when they sought me out and asked me.

I emphasize that they asked me, because many teens nowadays rarely seek out opportunities to live out their faith. When they asked me, I simply felt compelled to say yes. Little did I know what the Lord had in store for my teens and I that week.

During the week, I was able to witness my teens grow in their faith in ways that were honestly refreshing. As a Theology teacher, it is easy to get stuck in the wealth of knowledge within the Church without ever putting it to practice. I had taught several of the teens in classes previously with great success, and even those whom I had not taught were also well-versed in the faith. Gospel Roads gave these students and myself the chance to live out the faith we have learned. Learning is never a bad thing (in fact, we should always be learning more about our faith!), but what purpose does it serve if we never use it?

Gospel Roads gave us the avenue to practice the knowledge we had all learned. From the "normal" functions, such as Adoration, Confession, prayer, reflection, etc..., to visiting veterans, delivering meals, organizing and distributing clothes, and cleaning up the retreat center property, we were able to encounter Christ where we should—not just in our books, but our everyday lives. I felt that we were truly living out Christ's words in St. Matthew's Gospel, "...Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."



BE NOT AFRAID



A rather simple question began our Gospel Roads Washington D.C. journey, "What are my hopes and fears for the week?" Some wrote that they hoped to make new friends and feared not knowing what the week held, while others wrote that they hoped to have fun and feared working at unexpected service sites. No matter what each of our answers were, I realized by the end of the first night that none of us need worry. With the help of God, we were about to experience a week like no other.

Natalia Ruggiero
Bishop McDevitt High School
Class of 2013
Philadelphia, PA

One of the memorable service sites that impacted me was the Armed Forces Retirement Home. I had gone in with a somewhat open mind since I had never actually spoken with a veteran before, nor had I ever even thought of what they must have experienced

throughout their lives. As soon as I arrived with my group, we had the chance to interact with a couple of the veterans living in this beautiful, scenic place. I was immeasurably moved by the stories and accounts that I heard that day. The fact that these ordinary people responded to their call to serve in such a significant way mirrored exactly what we as Salesians were trying to do together on Gospel Roads.

A rather difficult question ended our journey, "Where have I seen God and what have I learned about myself?" As the Jesus candle was being passed around on the last night (a traditional reflective closing ceremony on Salesian retreats), I realized why God gave me the opportunity to participate on Gospel Roads Washington DC.

The ability to see God throughout the week in the faces of the various people we met at Interfaith Works Clothing Center and The Kennedy Institute -- as well as in one another -- strengthened my faith. Not only was I there to serve His people and see Him in others, but I was also there to find myself. It was a chance to grow in assurance of my relationship with God and in my leadership skills before going off to college in the fall.

Before the service program, I had been troubled with the thought that college would change me in a not-so-positive way, and that I would not be able to stand up for my faith and religion, as I had done in the past. I now have a new-found confidence that no matter where these four years of college take me, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.



TO SERVE, TO STRIVE, AND NOT TO YIELD

There are signs everywhere that represent the works and miracles of God in our lives, but due to a sort of blindness caused by society, media, and friends, we fail to notice these inner workings of God. On Gospel Roads, we are more aware of these signs because we are more open to everything around us without all the distractions we have grown so accustomed to.

Gospel Roads is a one-week service retreat in which young high school and college students walk with Jesus and serve the young and poor. Saint Francis Assisi tells us to "Preach the Gospel and, when necessary, use words." What he is stating is simply that our actions are enough to spread God's message. By serving others and sharing my happiness, I was able to radically live out my faith on the Gospel Roads.

Brandon Walsh
Salesian High School
Class of 2013
New Rochelle, NY



One of the many gifts that Gospel Roads brings is that it allows for each individual to experience and witness God's power. This is key because each person perceives each of His signs differently and experiences His presence differently. I experienced the power of God nearly everywhere I went on this retreat. This is significant to me because I recently started to lose my faith in Him.

What made it so hard to come back to my faith was the fact that I was scared; scared that an entity so powerful might not even be there at all. This is one of the main reasons that I needed to go on Gospel Roads, because I felt that God would help me realize Him again through the service I would perform and the people I would be surrounded by. Truthfully, I gained much more than I expected to during this service retreat, because not only did I again recognize His place in my life, but I felt His love and also learned much more about my being and character.

Each individual on Gospel Roads is placed into a group, and each group serves at a different worksite each day. During our week in Washington, D.C, we served at an Armed Forces Retirement Home; a retreat center called Our Lady of Mattaponi; a clothing store that gives free clothes away based on financial need known as Interfaith Works; a school for children with learning disabilities called the Kennedy Institute; and a food delivery service called Food for Friends.

Continued on next page →



TO SERVE, TO STRIVE, AND NOT TO YIELD

During this retreat, there were many highlights that truly made it worthwhile. I felt the absolute highlight on this Gospel Roads in particular was seeing all the smiles we brought to each person in the retirement home for the armed forces. Serving others brings a particular joy that can often be hard to explain. I would think of it as an inner peace or a unique type of feeling entirely. It is for this reason that I would want my friends to experience a service program like Gospel Roads. There is nothing like knowing that I made someone's day easier, brought a smile to someone's face, or even help him or her realize something new.

I came across an exceptional amount of people during Gospel Roads; however, there is one person I encountered that moved me most. At the Armed Forces Retirement Home, two others and myself were given the job of inviting the residents of the floor to a birthday party. At one point, we saw a nurse who was reading what appeared to be a religious book. After her declination of our invitation, I noticed that the text in her book was Arabic. Upon asking what she was reading, she answered that she was reading the Quran. The woman was slightly surprised to see how open we were, almost as if most people have negative reactions to such a sight. It was not until after Gospel Roads that I was told that around the world, people are literally dying just to read their Bible. And yet, in our country where we have freedom of religion, most do not even take advantage of the right and privilege we have to express and learn about our own Faith. I saw Christ in the woman we spoke to, because though she was scared of what we might have thought at first, she returned our openness and expressed that she understood we all come from the same God. Despite the fact that we were of different religions, she knew that we were all children of the same God.

Ultimately, Gospel Roads has proven to play a major role in my spiritual and overall growth. I was always told that it was perfectly fine to have questions about God and how His will and powers work; however, it was never explained to me as to what I should do when those questions start affecting my belief and faith. Every part of Gospel Roads D.C. allowed me to assess my doubts and myself, and revealed to me everlasting truths about God that words simply lack the accuracy to explain. Fundamentally, this is the meaning of trust – believing in something without needing proof. By placing my doubts, worries, and questions in Jesus' hands, I was able to once again trust myself to believe in Him.



TRUE SPIRIT OF SERVICE - GR II: PORT CHESTER



"Show me your hands. Do they have scars from giving? Show me your feet. Are they wounded in service?"

– Venerable Fulton Sheen

Thea Respicio
Vancouver, Canada
*Thea celebrated her 22nd
Birthday during Gospel Roads II: Port Chester*

When I first read this quote by Venerable Sheen, I was tremendously affected by his words and his questions reverberated through my mind for quite some time. It disturbed my soul because it probed something deep within me. What have I really done to serve my brothers

and sisters? Aware of how much God has blessed me, I wanted to give back to others the same love the Lord has given to me. Knowing the desires of my heart, the Lord presented me with an opportunity to do just that. News about a Gospel Roads mission trip to New York caught my attention and I immediately signed up.

With weeks of fundraising and God's providence, I was blessed to travel with four fellow parishioners from Vancouver, Canada to Port Chester, New York. Upon arrival, we were received with a warm welcome from the Salesian priests residing at the Holy Rosary community, and we immediately felt right at home. They were gracious enough to let us participate in their daily activities enabling us to fully immerse into their lifestyle. Father Vince Paczkowski was the Salesian priest who was in charge of our mission group, and it was inspiring to witness the amount of sacrifice he makes for his ministry. I am very grateful for having the chance to live with the Salesians of Don Bosco, as it allowed me to develop a deeper appreciation for priests. It really opened my eyes to the importance of their presence in our society. Priests are the greatest unsung heroes of today.

When I think of mission trips, building houses and other arduous activities immediately comes to mind. I tried to come to the mission trip with an open heart, but to be quite frank, I was acutely underwhelmed on the first day of service because we worked at the soup kitchen for a few hours and were sent home early afterwards. I was disappointed because I was expecting something more demanding and labor intensive than just chopping vegetables, plating cakes, and ladling soups. I wanted to see scars in my hands. I wanted to see wounds in my feet. However, God had a bigger message for me.

As our tasks intensified throughout the week, I quickly learned that the true spirit of service is not about what you do. It is all about who you are doing it with and who you are doing it for. I am reminded by "the little flower of Jesus," Saint Therese of Lisieux, who believed that life should be spent scattering "flowers"...that is, small acts of love. She had said that even though we cannot do great things all the time, we can do small things with great love. It is no wonder she is the patron saint of missionaries!

I will never forget working alongside the volunteers at the community center, soup kitchen, food pantry, and clothing drive at Port Chester. I saw Christ in each of the people I encountered, and through them, I truly understood that it is not in the extravagant gestures that one can show love to God. It is in the small things done with great devotion and unwavering love that one is able to serve another. At the end of each day, it is God who is glorified, and He does not look at the exterior appearance and acts. Instead, He sees what man cannot see. He looks at the heart.

**Happy Birthday,
Thea!**



SOUP KITCHEN SERVES ME HOPE

During my week on Gospel Roads II, the other participants and I lived amongst the Religious community of priests, brothers, and pre-novices at the Holy Rosary residence. Throughout the week, we served at a soup kitchen, youth center, and a local church. Before and after our service work every day, we were able to share mass, meals, and free time with the Religious community we lived with. It was through these activities that I was able to live out my faith and experience the power of God during the week.

The participants and I worked at a soup kitchen by helping the staff prepare for lunch every morning. We were able to meet people who have dedicated their lives to feeding the food-insecure. It was definitely a humbling experience to meet and work with these people. We were only there for 5 days, but these staff members get up every day to come to the soup kitchen and do God's work. It was a privilege to hear their stories and be able to work with them.

Amanda Carpenter
Saint Michael's College
Colchester, VT



Every day after we had helped prepare and serve lunch, we were able to sit and eat with the people who had come to the soup kitchen that day. There were some familiar faces, and also some new ones, every day. I think we all experienced some culture shock during these mealtimes. Most of the people who came for lunch spoke Spanish and sometimes a little English. Working together and using what little Spanish we knew, the other participants and I were able to talk with them, hear about their families, and oftentimes learn why and how they had become food-insecure. Many of them were immigrants who were trying to create better lives for themselves and the families they left behind in other countries. Some were even college educated and had simply fallen on hard times. No matter their stories, I felt an overwhelming sense of compassion and hurt for these people. I wasn't surprised by these feelings; I expected them. What I didn't expect was the immense amount of hope that radiated from these people. I don't think I ever heard one of them complain or feel sorry for themselves. Instead, I heard over and over plans for the future, plans to get better jobs, plans to bring families here from other countries, plans to make better lives for themselves. I heard over and over how great God was to these people. And once I heard it, I was able to see it too. I was able to see the spirit of God in them, the power He has to give them hope and opportunities for change. Yes, they may not have had enough to eat, they might have been poor, they might have even been homeless, but God has placed a hope so big and encompassing in those people that it was impossible not to notice. It proved to me that God can be found even in what seems to be the darkest and most hopeless of places.

Continued on next page →



SOUP KITCHEN SERVES ME HOPE

One night the other participants and I went to a Spanish mass together. During his homily, the priest explained to the parishioners (in Spanish of course), who we were and what we were doing there. After mass a mother came up to me with her daughter, who was probably 6 or 7 years old. The mother explained that she told her daughter we were helping the poor this week, and her daughter wanted to know more about it. After learning the daughter's name was Alejandra, I explained to her in a jumble of Spanish and English words I thought a 7 year old would understand, what we were doing and why it was so important to me. Alejandra immediately turned to her mom and said she wanted to do what we were doing one day. Before I left, I gave Alejandra a hug and prayed with her. I only talked with her for a few minutes, but Alejandra moved me more than anyone else I met that week. Her faith and resolve to one day follow in Christ's footsteps, just as we were doing that week, was astounding. I could just see the light of Christ in her eyes, and that gave me so much hope. Only God could move a 7 year old to say she too wants to help poor people one day.

During my week on Gospel Roads II, I met so many amazing people who showed me what it's like to walk on the Gospel Roads day in and day out. Although I've been on several Gospel Roads trips before, I take something new from each one. From this trip, I took away hope, compassion, and an even stronger will to keep God and His people, especially those who are suffering, in the center of my life.



GOSPEL ROADS I: TAMPA



The Gospel Roads session that I attended really influenced my life. Each day was eye-opening. One particular service site that stood out in my mind was our visit to San Jose Mission. When we arrived at the mission, we were greeted by about thirty kids, varying in age from six years old to fifteen.

Right away, the kids wanted to play games with us. We walked over to an open field where the kids said they liked to play soccer. We played all day long taking breaks to drink water and eat lunch. It was awesome seeing the look on their faces and seeing how much fun

Manny Carmona

St. Petersburg Catholic High School
Class of 2014
St. Petersburg, FL

they were having. I got to talk to the older guys there, and they told me that they normally are never out playing with all of the kids, which was sad. If it was not for Gospel Roads, then they would have not been out with everyone. It felt good to be one of the reasons why these kids were able to have so much fun!

One person that I met who was extremely influential and inspirational, was a lady named Miss Alma. Miss Alma worked at a homeless shelter as a janitor. She was the only lady on staff as a janitor for the whole complex – which was enormous! Not only did she work there, but she was also an employee at a neighboring thrift store and she worked for another building that she cleaned.

I was selected, along with two other campers, to follow Miss Alma around and help her with her work. We quickly realized that she does a lot – and she did not complain once. Right away, Miss Alma started talking to us and giving us advice for life as if she had known us forever. She explained to us that people who are in need of help come to get service at the homeless shelter. She also said that these people are constantly viewed as if they were worth nothing, but everyone, indeed, deserves respect. People should not be so quick to judge others; more people should take the time to talk with people in need.

So during our time at the shelter, those of us on Gospel Roads struck up conversations with the people at the shelter. Each conversation that I had was amazing! Each person was eager to talk to me and give me advice so that I could learn from mistakes that they made. I learned so much from that trip in which I plan to use in my life outside of Gospel Roads.

There was a man I helped named Carlos who brought about a hundred boxes of food along with a water fountain that he had purchased and was installing in the building. He looked like he was in his early 60's. I was later told that he was 77 years old! He had so much energy and was using it to help people in need.

Another person I met was a little boy named Jesus. I definitely saw God in him. Jesus was about nine years old, and was very hyper and energetic! We became buddies instantly and he followed me everywhere. He was always the first to invite other kids over to join in the games that we were playing.

I was fortunate enough to be able to say that I saw God in so many people during my ONE week attending Gospel Roads. The experience of Gospel Roads was truly life-changing. I definitely recommend this trip to everyone, and I can not wait until the next opportunity arises for me to partake in another service project.



PERFORMING WORKS WITH GREAT FAITH

"For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead" (Jas 2:26). This passage from the book of James describes how each person should live their life in order to earn salvation. A person cannot just be faithful; they must also serve others and show their faith through action and love. Attending Gospel Roads Tampa taught me this through scripture, hard work, and community. It was a powerful experience and I wouldn't hesitate to go back.

The week started off at a place called Feeding America, where the group sorted food and other donated products into the specified boxes. This was the most challenging day for me because of all the physical labor that had to be applied. Although it was a very strenuous day, I gained an appreciation for all the work that goes into distributing food to the numerous banks across the country.

Two other places we went to during the week were Santa Maria Mission and San Jose Mission. Santa Maria is a church and food bank located in a very poor Spanish community. It was challenging trying to communicate with the people there because very little English was spoken.

Despite the language barrier, we managed to entertain the kids with rocks and kicking an empty bottle around. They had no toys, but they were perfectly content and creative with what they had.

San Jose Mission is a community of migrant families. This was my favorite day because we got to play with the kids all day long. We played soccer, and tag, and climbed trees. I loved seeing them smiling and having fun, while being able to connect with them. The hardest part was saying goodbye. Both these places made a huge impact on me because I love working with children. Seeing the conditions these kids live in was heartbreaking, knowing how fortunate my family and I have been.

We also worked at Metropolitan Ministries, which is a homeless shelter, food bank, clothing distributor, warehouse, daycare, and many other facilities. We were split into different work groups for the day. My group's job was sorting school supplies and stuffing backpacks to be distributed to impoverished families. Out of the whole GR experience, this made the biggest impact on me. I learned that Metropolitan Ministries gives away 2,500 backpacks per year just in the Tampa Bay area alone. The enormous task of sorting and stuffing all of these backpacks falls on one man. This man is a volunteer, and he told me the Lord called him to do this work just like the Lord is calling each and every one of us to serve others.

Gospel Roads is a very challenging, yet rewarding week. It requires a lot of endurance and patience for difficult tasks. A few times I had to stop and pray to the Holy Spirit for strength to continue. It allowed me to grow in my faith through all the reflections we did after each day of work, and also allowed me to grow closer to the other participants. I strongly encourage anyone who has the opportunity to attend a GR to go -- because you will grow closer to God and have blast along the way.

Emily Pingleton

Class of 2014

St. Petersburg Catholic High School

St. Petersburg, FL



GOSPEL ROADS I: TORONTO

Built on the everlasting love of Christ, the depths of our hearts begin to overflow as we share His compassion with others. The Gospel Roads is a path leading to an encounter with Christ. In the past week, this encounter with Jesus became an encounter with the outcast, sick, lonely, and needy. I met many people who, in some way were in a state of fragility and brokenness.

After being reminded of the reality that I was already aware of, like how abortion is legal, that there are many homeless men and women, and that many children in third world countries starve, I felt hopeless because of how so many of God's children were lost. At The Good Shepherd, a charity that provides food, shelter, and

services for the homeless, we served many men and women who were caught in the vicious cycle of drugs and alcohol. Fr. Ed, a priest who had been working at The Good Shepherd for ten years, described to us the different things that he had experienced. He saw it all: men who have almost died because of a drug overdose, women who have continuously returned to prostitution, and men who have died in the shelter.

As he was telling us this, I was inspired by how he continued to pray and hope for these men and women who seemed to be so distant from God. Fr. Ed reminded me of the Good Shepherd, who never forgets any of His sheep, who goes searching for those who have gone astray, and who continues to hope in the most desolate places.

Throughout the week, this image became the foundation of my every word, deed, thought, and prayer. More and more, God continuously filled my heart, inspiring me to pour out His joy and compassion unto others—to make Christ's love for them known. Realizing that God is looking after every member of His flock, I came to see true beauty and gentle love of God.

Called to share this same love with the Christ I encountered on the streets, I found myself looking at the people I served with hope and compassion, imagining the face of Christ as He holds His sheep close in His arms.



Jasmin Bermejo

Kwantlen Park Secondary School
Class of 2015
Surrey, British Columbia



CONQUERING THE TRENCHES OF LAZINESS



Ryann Maure

Class of 2017 at Ryerson University
Toronto, ON

The challenges throughout the Gospel Roads program indefinitely changed me for the better, especially with God's help. One of the most difficult things to conquer was my internal conflict with motivation.

Initially, I felt forced to participate on Gospel Roads because I knew this retreat involved work; and with the underlying laziness of summer, all I wanted to do was just enjoy video games, movies, and unlimited blabbing on social media.

Apparently, my lack of motivation made a negative impact on my faith life. Since the start of the summer, I stopped going to church every Sunday and forgot about

praying. But I would always relieve myself by saying, "God will understand me every time I forget to pray or go to church".

I came face to face with these issues on Gospel Roads, most significantly through the worksites. Working in places such as a homeless shelter and disability centers brought me out of my element, and at one point, I felt like I wanted to drop out of the retreat and just give up. However, through prayer and reflection, I realized the Lord was constantly reminding me why I was doing this in the first place. With that constant reminder and the perseverance the Lord granted me, I was able to see the bigger picture every time I finished at a worksite. Granted, I was able to see and interact with the people I was doing the work for, which made the experience so particularly rewarding.

Now that the retreat is over, I can say I'm walking away a better person by overcoming these challenges. I learned that I could be selfless no matter the situation and the difficulty that came with it. By being selfless, I was reminded that help could be genuine, especially at heart. Putting my heart into this retreat allowed for a sense of great joy and happiness. I was content with the work that I did and I did not expect anything in return.

Saying I am thankful for this experience is an understatement, because the gratitude I have for everyone responsible for making this retreat possible -- is undoubtedly immense. I thank God and everyone involved for surrounding me with energy, for pushing me to continue walking on the Gospel Road and for fueling me to do everything with love.



GOSPEL ROADS I: STONY POINT



"You are doing what?" "Stony Point...is that a Beach Resort?" "Why would you want to spend a week doing that?" "You are spending your vacation with teenagers? Why aren't you spending it with your family?"

These are just a few questions I heard from people when I tried to explain to them that I was going to spend a week with young people doing service.

Lisa Stacy
Teacher

Don Bosco Cristo Rey High School
Takoma Park, MD

The decision to go on Gospel Roads for me was an easy one, for not one person was there by accident. They were all called by God. These young people had the love and the courage to answer that call with a resounding, "YES!" So, if I have the opportunity to spend my time helping

our youth (the future of our Church) answer the call of God, than I too will have a resounding "YES!"

For a week, we served, prayed, played and lived as a community; as a family. The work was not easy, but there was never a complaint. We served at five different service sites. There was much to be done: weed pulling, cleaning waterways, playing with children, fixing fences, harvesting potatoes, and harvesting squash bugs (yuck!) just to name a few.

I remember cleaning a water way that was full of debris and looking up on the bank to see two of our participants struggling to remove something. These two people a week prior could have passed each other on the street and not known each other. But now, they were brother and sister in Christ, struggling to extract a vacuum cleaner from the banks of a waterway that would provide drinking water for thousands of people. The exuberant yells of victory over the vacuum echoed not only in our ears, but in our hearts.

We prayed together with daily mass, praise and worship, formation in social justice and were able to share our love for Jesus Christ as a family. There is nothing stronger than the bond of a family, and since God is our Father, our brothers and sisters are everywhere. We were there in thanksgiving, in praise, in the joy of being able to serve God and His family; our family. We lived and played in community, sharing food, stories, laughter and pains. The spirit and joy that shone throughout the week solidified the bonds of friendship, fellowship and family.

I will tell you that my heart bleeds for the people who do not have the opportunity to attend this service program, for they have not yet had the honor of experiencing the pure joy and energy that comes from walking the Gospel Road. I have had the privilege of seeing Jesus in each and every one of the participants and in the people we were able to serve. I have had the privilege of seeing the power of the Holy Spirit work through each and every person on Gospel Roads. I know that, if those who questioned me only had the opportunity to witness what I have their life would be changed. They, too, would want to walk the Gospel Roads.

It is my prayer that the experience our young people had, the experience I had, and the service that was completed was just the first step on our Gospel Road, our opportunity to walk with Jesus Christ. It was an honor to accompany these young men and women -- my family in Christ -- on Gospel Roads and to watch the Holy Spirit working through each participant.

"In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ." Ephesian 1:11-12

PLANTING SOMETHING MEANINGFUL

This summer I had one week of vacation saved up and was discerning how to spend it. I almost bought tickets to return home, but something kept tugging at me to relive my highlight of last summer: Gospel Roads.

GR Stony Point is an experience not to miss out on. This was my first time as Young Team and I wanted to be an example for my team to learn from. Ironically, I ended up learning the most from the example put forth by my team and all the amazing participants involved.

Every day was a hard working day. From the first day where we uprooted brush and overgrowth from a trail at the Marion Shrine, to the last day where different teams scrubbed mold off fences, bagged and sorted thousands of pounds of food for a local pantry, and wandered around the woods of Rockland, NY picking up trash and moving boulders. These hard working Salesians would come back every afternoon sweaty and tired -- but always cheerful! Before Gospel Roads, I thought teenagers were lazy, but I felt the Lord empowering all of us to have energy to get the job done and to have fun while doing it.

I'll never forget the day at the food pantry when the gardener came to introduce himself to our group. His name was Tesfeh; he was from Eritrea, an African country I had never heard of. His clothes were in terrible condition and he had hands that had seen a lot of work.

I did not think much of him based on his appearance, but he told us how he avoided persecution in Africa as a teen and went on to be educated in Germany, Paris, and eventually America. He holds two Master's degrees and a Doctorate's in Political Science. He speaks three languages fluently and is more educated than I will ever be, but works his days in the garden growing vegetables. We asked him why he didn't pursue his full potential, and he responded by saying, "I find love and peace in the garden, that's all I need."

This is only one of the many stories from my experience on Gospel Roads. The bottom line is -Gospel Roads will change you. Prepare to work, to make quality friends, grow closer to God, and (if you are lucky enough to have him as a director) witness Matt Marchand recite six minutes of cow jokes from heart - which, by the way - are all hysterical.

God Bless!



Luke Flanagan

St. Martin of Tours Youth Group
Philadelphia, PA



THE WEEK THAT CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Believe it or not, the most exciting week I had this summer was with a very small group of people who-- at the beginning of the week were strangers -- but in a short amount of time, became family. Gospel Roads Stony Point was one of the most amazing weeks ever. Not only would I recommend it to my friends, I'd recommend the experience to anyone. The absolute highlight of this week, I would have to say, were the amazing people I encountered and the excitement they had, not only in the service they performed, but in everything they did. The amount of energy that everyone had that week was spectacular and unbelievable.



Penelope Placide
Don Bosco Cristo Rey High School
Class of 2014
Takoma Park, MD

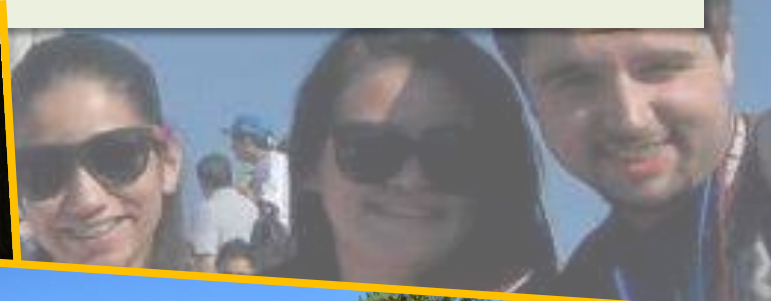
I would encourage all my friends to try this experience; it's an experience we cannot receive in a classroom, but it can change your life forever. During this week, we received so much more from the service sites than we were able to give. It was incredible to witness a particular kind of goodness and selflessness that I don't always see

in my day-to-day life.

On Gospel Roads, we were able to step out of our crazy schedules to spend time in prayer and service to others: things that we don't always find time for in our everyday life. This was a week to step out of our comfort zone in a fun way, to spread the message of God's love.

To anyone who is thinking about Gospel Roads next year, take a chance to find out what a great influence you can have on the people around you – just by being yourself, having fun and serving others.

I leave you with this quote from Pope Francis: "Today, in the light of the word of God that we have heard, what is the Lord saying to us? Three simple ideas: Go, do not be afraid, and serve."



DON BOSCO AT WORLD YOUTH DAY

When we pulled up to the Don Bosco school in Itaquera, Sao Paulo, I remember seeing a group of people approaching the van I was in and hearing "Bom Dia!", "Oi!", "Bem-vindo!" as we stepped out of the van and being bombarded with hugs and smiles from the locals who were excited and -- must I say -- very happy upon our arrival. At that very moment, I knew I was home because the warmth I received from them was something that reminded me of the Salesian community back home in Chicago. As for the week following World Youth Day, I remember feeling something very similar to what I felt in Itaquera, because although we were all complete strangers, it was very easy to start a conversation with any random pilgrim we would run into.

Marisol Vazquez
Dominican University
Chicago, IL



It was pretty amazing to see the Catholic youth from all over the world and how much of a difference we all made in the lives of those who live in Rio de Janeiro. One of the most memorable moments was when we walked from our hotel to Copacabana Beach the Saturday of the vigil. We walked approximately three kilometers, but I do not remember feeling them at all because the energy and the vibe we all shared overpowered any feeling of weakness, sadness, or tiredness. I remember people chanting, "Esta es la Juventud del Papa", or "Papa Francisco, Juntos en Cristo!"

Ever since I heard about the experiences my friends had on World Youth Day in Madrid two years ago, I was determined to attend World Youth Day in Rio. There was no doubt in my mind that I would go. In the months before my pilgrimage to Brazil, there were a series of obstacles I needed to overcome. One of them was how I was going to pay for it. I prayed to God to help save money and not waste it on things that were not needed. Another thing was a bit ironic. I was so caught up in figuring out how to pay for the pilgrimage, that I began to work more and more-- and began to go to church less and less. When the time came for me to leave, I had completely lost focus on why I was going to such an amazing country. On the plane ride there, I told myself to be open to anything because this was a once in a lifetime experience. I didn't know what to expect, so thankfully, this helped me keep an open mind.

Continued on next page →



WORLD YOUTH DAY: RIO

I also wondered how difficult it would be to communicate with the locals because there was a huge barrier between us: the language. While in Sao Paulo, I was having a conversation with one of the priests. I said how the language wasn't much of a barrier because our Salesian charisma made it easy for us to understand one another. Then Father Jose said to me, "It's not the Salesian charisma -- but rather our love for God." What he told me stayed with me the rest of the trip because during the week of World Youth Day, what I felt in Itaquera was similar to my experience with other pilgrims in Rio. Although we were all complete strangers, it was very easy to start a conversation with any random pilgrim we would run into.

On the plane ride back home to the States, I, without knowing, put to work what Pope Francis sent us to do. I sat next to a lady who was from a different faith and asked me if it was my first time in Brazil and if I had gone for World Youth Day. I said yes. She then asked if I had traveled alone. Again my answer was yes. She then added, "You know I respect the Catholic Church because they stand firm in what they believe and do not back down. I love that. I love how much they do for the communities they are in. I live in Niteroi, and there is this big Don Bosco school there and they do so many things for the kids. It is a good input to our community." Now I had not told her I was a Salesian but when I did, the look on her face was something I will never forget. It is hard to describe what I felt then, but I remember not being afraid.



SHATTERING LANGUAGE BARRIERS & CHANGING THE WORLD

A year ago at this time, if someone were to ask me if I would be attending World Youth Day, my answer would have been, "No." I was very determined that I would not go, that it would be the first summer I did not go anywhere of significance.

Of course, God had other plans. When I received a personal invitation from the Salesians to go, I could not refuse. I was extremely nervous and apprehensive about going; I really thought Brazil was not the place for me. However, I know that had I not attended, I would've missed one of the greatest moments of my life.

This was not my first trip where I went somewhere and did not know the native language. The simplest of things becomes difficult. Even asking where I could find a place that had bug spray was difficult. But somehow, only knowing one language is a struggle and a blessing at the same time. I was forced to listen closely and think of innovative ways to create my own sign language.

What I find to be the best part of World Youth Day is that, regardless of the length of a conversation with someone, we always managed to communicate. The few words we did know in each other's language got the message across.

That's a valuable lesson to learn.

When I'm home, I take for granted that I can easily communicate with others, yet oftentimes fail to communicate efficiently. But when I am put with someone who does not know my language, we try so much harder to communicate. The first lesson Brazil taught me was that if I could successfully communicate God's love here in a foreign country, then I must do a better job with people in my own town.



Joe "Brooklyn" Hadzovic
Bensonhurst Cluster of Youth Ministry
Brooklyn, NY

Continued on next page →



SHATTERING LANGUAGE BARRIERS & CHANGING THE WORLD

Before I left, I told my Youth Minister that I would meet the Pope face to face, and I would talk to him about the problems the young Church faces today. Although I never did meet him one on one, Pope Francis told me something that was the fundamental solution to the major issues I had in mind. He said the Church needs “young people evangelizing young people.”

Although we did not meet Pope Francis, he definitely spoke to us -- and so did God. On the final day, when I looked at the crowd of almost three million people of over 150 countries on Copacabana Beach, I realized that this event was not only about going home and being missionaries (which was the theme of WYD) but this event was also about evangelizing each other, the pilgrims. Whether it was walking six miles to the beach, standing for four hours in one spot, or sharing the last of my water with someone, we were all evangelizing each other.

Now is the time to be missionaries, and as young people, bring others to Christ. If we can put this into practice – we can change the world one person at a time.

The Catholic Church is much bigger than our own church back home. It stretches across to every continent and every language. It is up to us to be missionaries not only in the places we travel, but in the places we live. They are the young who will change the world, because they have the greatest power to do it. I leave you with the lyrics of the WYD theme song:

Christ invites us,
Come to me be, my friend,
Christ he invites us,
Go be missionaries.



THE GOOD NIGHT NEW BEGINNINGS: “WAIT ’TIL NEXT YEAR!”



Fr. Abraham Feliciano, SDB
Province Delegate for
Youth Ministry

For those of us who consider ourselves baseball fans, the advent of September usually brings about at least one of several possible prevailing attitudes towards our favorite team: extreme confidence (“Yes, they’re going to do it this year!”), reasonable hope (“They have a good chance!”), blind faith (“Anything can happen!”), or optimistic resignation (“Wait ‘til next year!”). While many sports fans of professional or amateur teams have probably experienced one or more of these attitudes during the course of their casual or obsessive

fandom, only a select few fans have acutely experienced that last attitude of optimistic resignation (“Wait ‘til next year!”) in such a way that they would become identified with it. The Boston Red Sox and Chicago Cubs fans may

come to mind. But, long before the “Curse of the Bambino” had turned half a century old (and was eventually broken in 2004), and long before Cubs fans came to believe in the “Billy Goat Curse,” there were the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Prior to taking up residence in Los Angeles, the Dodgers were a mainstay of Brooklyn, NY. Yet, they were very much the “ugly duckling” of New York-area baseball, behind the then-New York Giants (now San Francisco), and the already legendary Yankees. Between 1941 and 1953, the Dodgers would play in five World Series and lose them all to the rival Yankees. The team’s unofficial slogan literally became “Wait ‘til next year!” However, in 1955 “next year” finally arrived as the Jackie Robinson-led Dodgers finally defeated the Yankees and they became the “Boys of Summer,” (a name given to them by Roger Kahn in his 1972 book by the same name). Their hard work and persistence, coupled with the hope and faith of their fans were finally rewarded with timeless victory.

Few of us will ever play in a professional sporting event, much less World Series. However, many of us know what it’s like to come face to face with failure, and to struggle with not only resignation, but possibly even despair. After trying again and again, we might finally adopt an attitude of “why bother?” And, yet, if we take the attitude of “Wait ‘til next year!” and see how it applies to our lives as Christian disciples, we realize that Jesus assures that we can experience victory not only next year or tomorrow, but today, here and now.

The end of summer signals countless things for everyone, but arguably it is most associated with the start of school. Virtually every youth in the United States is either beginning or already has begun another school year. Summer may have been a time of varied or mixed experiences. Some of us may have had a true experience of joy, relaxation and renewal. Others may have had to work a lot, go to summer school, or even struggle with boredom or loneliness. Some of us may have spent time reflecting or even dwelling on the errors or disappointments of the past school year (poor grades, athletic defeat, broken friendships, etc.). Maybe some of us made resolutions to “do better next year.”

Well, next year has arrived.

Our Faith teaches us that with Jesus, there is always a chance to begin anew. The New Testament is full of numerous episodes where we see Jesus giving people a fresh start. In the Gospel of Luke, we meet a man

Continued on next page →

THE GOOD NIGHT

named Zacchaeus who was a tax collector, one of the most reviled and dishonorable jobs a Jewish person could perform in the times of Jesus. Jesus invites himself to Zacchaeus' home, dines with him, and after Zacchaeus promises to mend his ways, declares him a new man:

"And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost'" (Luke 19:9-10).

The woman caught in the very act of adultery in the Gospel of John has her life (both earthly and eternal) saved and renewed by Jesus, and merely utters one simple response in the entire incident:

"The Jesus straightened up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned?' She replied, 'No one, sir.' Then Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go, [and] from now on do not sin anymore'" (John 8:11).

And, if further examples are needed of God's desire and power to give us a fresh start, we only need read the "Parable of the Lost Son" in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 15:11-32), where the father exclaims:

". . . this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found," (Luke 15:24).

St. John Bosco firmly believed that the goodness in a young person could triumph over any weakness they might possess or struggle with. Our Rector Major, Fr. Pascual Chávez in this year's Strenna reminds us of this confidence in the victory of the good in a young person:

"Even the most callous boys have a spot," Don Bosco writes. 'The first duty of the educator is to locate that sensitive spot, that responsive chord in the boy's heart . . .'"

Regardless of whether or not some of us may be starting another school year, pastoral year, or simply a new season, we all have chance for a new beginning. Through God's grace and love, each of us have been given the opportunity and ability to rise above any challenges, and even out of the very ashes of defeat, to share in the victory that Jesus won for us. The past does not have to determine our today or tomorrow. Let us embrace the new beginning, the fresh start, the arrival of the "next year" that God offers us. Let us resolve not to live in "optimistic resignation," and certainly -- not in despair. Rather, let us embrace the true optimism and joy borne of our faith, grateful to God for the blessings and graces bestowed upon us along with the lessons we have learned along the way. Let us live as a Christian people, victorious today.

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."

COMING SOON

2013 Meeting for Salesian CYMs

September 17-19, 2013
Newton, New Jersey

2013 October Leadership Retreat

October 7-10, 2013
Stony Point, New York

2013 National Catholic Youth Conference

November 21-23, 2013
Indianapolis, Indiana

*More information about the Salesian presence
at the NCYC will be available at
www.salesianym.com*

