

Salesian Missions

Trading under the name of
Salesians of Don Bosco
Box 3209 North Riding 2162
66 Nelson Road Booyens
Johannesburg 2091
Tel: 27 (0) 11 476 8315
missionoffice@bucknet.co.za
www.salesianmissions.co.za

SALESIAN SPOTLIGHT

CHRISTMAS 2020



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE SALESIAN MISSIONS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA FOR 32 YEARS

May the Peace and Love of the Christ child and His Mother be with you all this Christmas and in the year ahead. May you rest in the deep assurance that in knowing Him, you have everything. Happy Christmas. From Salesian Missions



APOSTOLIC LETTER OF THE HOLY FATHER POPE FRANCIS ON THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF THE NATIVITY SCENE

“The enchanting image of the Christmas crèche, so dear to the Christian people, never ceases to arouse amazement and wonder. The depiction of Jesus’ birth is itself a simple and joyful proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The nativity scene is like a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture. As we contemplate the Christmas story, we are invited to set out on a spiritual journey, drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman. We come to realize that so great is his love for us that he became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with him.

The origin of the Christmas crèche is found above all in certain details of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem, as related in the Gospels. The evangelist Luke says simply that Mary “gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn” (2:7). Because Jesus was laid in a manger, the nativity scene is known in Italian as a presepe, from the Latin word praesepe, meaning “manger”.

Coming into this world, the Son of God was laid in the place where animals feed. Hay became the first bed of the One who would reveal himself as “the bread come down from heaven” (Jn 6:41). Saint Augustine, with other Church Fathers, was impressed by this symbolism: “Laid in a manger, he became our food” (Sermon 189, 4). Indeed, the nativity scene evokes a number of the mysteries of Jesus’ life and brings them close to our own daily lives.

But let us go back to the origins of the Christmas crèche so familiar to us. Fifteen days before Christmas Francis asked a local man named John, to help him realise his desire “to bring to life the memory of that babe born in Bethlehem, to see as

much as possible with my own bodily eyes the discomfort of His Infant needs, how He lay in a manger, and how with ox and an ass standing by, he was laid upon a bed of hay”. At this, his faithful friend went immediately to prepare all that the Saint had asked. On 25 December, friars came to Greccio from various parts, together with people from the farmsteads in the area, who brought flowers and torches to light up that holy night. When Francis arrived, he found a manger full of hay, an ox and a donkey. At Greccio there were no statues; the nativity scene was enacted and experienced by all who were present.

This is how our tradition began: with everyone gathered in joy around the cave, with no distance between the original event and those sharing in its mystery. Setting up the Christmas crèche in our homes helps us to relive the history of what took place in Bethlehem. Naturally, the Gospels

remain our source for understanding and reflecting on that event. At the same time, its portrayal in the crèche helps us to imagine the scene. It touches our hearts and makes us enter into salvation history as contemporaries of an event that is living and real in a broad gamut of historical and cultural contexts.

In a particular way, from the time of its Franciscan origins, the nativity scene has invited us to “feel” and “touch” the poverty that God’s Son took upon himself in the Incarnation. Implicitly, it summons us to follow him along the path of humility, poverty and self-denial that leads from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross. It asks

us to meet him and serve him by showing mercy to those of our brothers and sisters in greatest need (cf. Mt 25:31-46).

I would like now to reflect on the various elements of the nativity scene in order to appreciate their deeper meaning. First, there is the back-



ground of a starry sky wrapped in the darkness and silence of night. The landscapes that are part of the nativity scene also deserve some mention. With what emotion should we arrange the mountains, streams, sheep and shepherds in the nativity scene! As we do so, we are reminded that, as the prophets had foretold, all creation rejoices in the coming of the Messiah.

The angels and the guiding star are a sign that we too are called to set out for the cave and to worship the Lord.



Unlike so many other people, busy about many things, the shepherds become the first to see the most essential thing of all: the gift of salvation. It is the humble and the poor who greet the event of the Incarnation.

6. It is customary to add many symbolic figures to our nativity scenes. First, there are the beggars and the others who know only the wealth of the heart.

From the manger, Jesus proclaims, in a meek yet powerful way, the need for sharing with the poor as the path to a more human and fraternal world in which no one is excluded or marginalized.

Children – but adults too! – often love to add to the nativity scene other figures that have no apparent connection with the Gospel accounts. Yet, each in its own way, these fanciful additions show that in the new world inaugurated by Jesus there is room for whatever is truly human and for all God's creatures. From the shepherd to the blacksmith, from the baker to the musicians, from the women carrying jugs of water to the children at play: all this speaks of the everyday holiness, the joy of

doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way, born whenever Jesus shares his divine life with us.

Gradually, we come to the cave, where we find the figures of Mary and Joseph.

Mary is a mother who contemplates her child and shows him to every visitor. The figure of Mary makes us reflect on the great mystery that surrounded this young woman when God knocked on the door of her immaculate heart. In her, we see the Mother of God who does not keep her Son only to herself, but invites everyone to obey his word and to put it into practice (cf. Jn 2:5).

At Mary's side, shown protecting the Child and his Mother, stands Saint Joseph. He is usually depicted with staff in hand, or holding up a lamp. Saint Joseph plays an important role in the life of Jesus and Mary. He is the guardian who tirelessly protects his family.

When, at Christmas, we place the statue of the Infant Jesus in the manger, the nativity scene suddenly comes alive. God



appears as a child, for us to take into our arms. Beneath weakness and frailty, he conceals his power that creates and transforms all things. It seems impossible, yet it is true: in Jesus, God was a child, and in this way he wished to reveal the greatness of his love: by smiling and opening his arms to all. The birth of a child awakens joy and wonder; it sets before us the great mystery of life. Seeing the bright eyes of a young couple gazing at their newborn child, we can understand the feelings of Mary and Joseph who, as they looked at the Infant Jesus, sensed God's presence in their lives.

God's ways are astonishing, for it seems impossible that he



should forsake his glory to become a man like us. To our astonishment, we see God acting exactly as we do: he sleeps, takes milk from his mother, cries and plays like every other child! As always, God baffles us. He is unpredictable, constantly doing what we least expect. The nativity scene shows God as he came into our world, but it also makes us reflect on how our life is part of God's own life. It invites us to become his disciples if we want to attain ultimate meaning in life.

Kneeling before him, they understand that the God who with sovereign wisdom guides the course of the stars also guides the course of history, casting down the mighty and raising up the lowly. Upon their return home, they would certainly have told others of this amazing encounter with the Messiah, thus initiating the spread of the Gospel among the nations.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Christmas crèche is part of the precious yet demanding process of passing on the faith. Beginning in childhood, and at every stage of our lives, it teaches us to contemplate Jesus, to experience God's love for us, to feel and believe that God is with us and that we are with him, his children, brothers and sisters all, thanks to that Child who is the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin Mary. And to realize that in that knowledge we find true happiness. Like Saint Francis, may we open our hearts to this simple grace, so that from our wonderment a humble prayer may arise: a prayer of thanksgiving to God, who wished to share with us his all, and thus never to leave us alone." Given in Greccio, at the Shrine of the Nativity, on 1 December in the year 2019, the seventh of my Pontificate.



FRANCISCUS





SALESIAN INSTITUTE YOUTH PROJECTS - CAPE TOWN

Learning to construct and live a sustainable livelihood. Education in the 21st century

The Salesian Institute Youth Projects *Learn to Live School of Skills* recently took part in the first ever virtual World Education Week conference, where 100 schools from across the globe were selected to speak on different topics related to learning in the 21st century. *Learn to Live* was one of only seven schools in South Africa invited to speak at the week-long event, where we shared our insights on the implementation of project-based learning, (PBL) as one of just a few schools in the country piloting this teaching methodology.



And as the world changes at an exponential rate, education at school level has become critical and Professor Tom Ryan has been key to creating and implementing this methodology at *Learn to Live*. Project-based learning unlocks 21st century competencies and solution-seeking mindsets so that the youth become employable, engaged and entrepreneurial". We know that technology is changing the way we live and work. The Fourth Industrial Revolution means that we should all be looking to teach new skills and ways of thinking that will be needed for the shifting job opportunities of the future.



With youth unemployment at an all-time high and so many young people not in education, employment or training, (NEETS) the time to shake things up in the classroom is now. The role of educators is to prepare young people for the world; to do this effectively in this day and age requires finding interactive and engaging ways to teach, promote creativity and innovation, and build up the personal growth and self-esteem of learners. We need to instil a love for learning. So, how do we achieve this? Project-based learning is a tool used to facilitate the development and learning process of our youth.

The creation of PBL was a combination of the best of both Don Bosco's preventive system and Paulo Freire's pedagogy of love, and its architecture is underpinned by five primary practices:

A need to redesign the way we teach in order to break the cycle of poor-quality education, which would ultimately allow students to build far more sustainable livelihoods for themselves.

The conceptual framework that PBL employs is Cultural Historic Activity Theory (CHAT). It is a tool that guides thinking, observing, analysis and activity.

An authentic learning process is a **co-managed process**. Learning should be a **mediated process**. At *Learn to Live* we have three learning spaces in which this happens – the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) space, design or maker space and a creative space called MADD (music, art, dance and drama).

The need to **converse more effectively**. Learning is social – much of it is about conversation.

Learn to Live is considered to be a safe place. We provide three nutritious meals a day, cover transport costs to and from school, as well as the costs of learning materials, and (more importantly) we offer mental health programmes, facilitated by social workers and occupational therapists. With the removal of these stressors and the implementation of new and innovative teaching methodology, learners are finding their voices, attendance and discipline are improving, and confidence levels are increasing at a phenomenal rate. We believe that project-based learning is the way of the future, and we are seeing the benefits for both educators and learners alike. Testament to this is the commitment by the DOE to institutionalise this methodology, in all schools across the country in a few short years. To view the online virtual T4 event recording please go to:



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyNI9NEZ_4A



“I asked God one day: how am I going to get out of this?”

Testimony of Abraham Lottering, from gangster to dedicated Salesian

Salesian Institute Cape Town. Abraham Lottering, also affectionately known by the nickname of “Mr. Focus”, is a 39-year-old man who has a past of abuse and violence behind him. As a child, his parents abused him and, in the early years of his adult life, he was homeless. From an early age he was forced to try to survive amidst emotional and physical disturbances and soon found himself involved in drugs and the life of street gangs. Despite the circumstances he was in, “Mr. Focus” had a desire to someday become someone important and with a purpose in life. He didn't know how he could escape this life of crime and violence, but he knew he wanted happiness.

Thus, together with his brother, he left the rural area where he lived and moved to the heart of the metropolis of Cape Town. It was during this time that he found refuge at the Cape Town City Missions, where the pastor took him under his protective wing, as he saw some potential in this young man. Abraham was welcomed by several people, but ended up being kicked out, living out on the streets for the next three years.

He said this was probably the worst experience he had ever had. “I asked God one day when I was really desperate, how am I going to get out of this?” Mr. Focus recalled. The City Mission pastor, after a long search on the streets, found him and encouraged him to work with young people. He introduced him to the Salesians and Abraham met Mr Greg Berry, who was involved in missionary work and youth activities. Greg helped him fill out a CV and find a real job.

He became acquainted with the program conducted by the Salesians “Waves of Change”, which prepares young people at risk for employment in the maritime sector. This is where Mr. Focus has finally found his calling and he set himself the goal of learning as much as possible about this sector.

Due to economic difficulties, however, the program was interrupted in 2018. Abraham, however, asked and obtained permission to continue free of charge, granted so as not to leave the young in need alone. When South Africa was hit hard by the pandemic this year, Mr. Focus once again showed his dedication to young people by volunteering to accompany the Salesian Institute Youth Projects with the delivery of food packages. He put his life at risk to bring food and basic necessities to families in need.

“I want to be like Don Bosco,” Abraham says with a smile. “I want to spread happiness and hope. The Salesians are my home, I feel safe and know that I belong here.” **ANS**



PORSCHE STUDENTS DELIVER PARCELS TO THE POOR



As part of supporting our beneficiaries, we are thankfully still able, with the help of some international funders, to deliver food parcels to families. Coordinating, packing and distributing is done by the staff, and this time the Porsche students as part of their social responsibility obligations, did their part as well. Well done all!

WAVES OF CHANGE GRADUATION

Well done to the last Waves of Change Programme cohort for 2020 who graduated on Friday 20 November. Salesian Institute Youth Projects assisting youth at risk in preparation to work in the maritime industry. **FRIEDA PEHLIVAN**





DON BOSCO EDUCATIONAL CENTRE - ENNERDALE



Two letters, showing the effect of Covid-19 on the people of Ennerdale. One is a letter of thanks to Salesian Co-Operator, Jessica Polley, who goes around giving food, clothing and shoes to the needy. The second is a child's lament about the unkind conditions imposed on people.

Dear Caring Person.

I cannot begin to thank you for your generous gift. It has come at a time when we had such a great need for it. A part of me had started to believe that such kindness no longer exists. But I am so very happy to have been proved wrong.

The girls are over the moon with their new things! And I am beyond grateful.

Thank you for your kindness. May the blessing you have given to us, return to you hundred-fold!

Thank You!

Kind Regards
Mommy + girls

Covid-19 Jodie-Li Isaacs

I am Jodie-Li, fifteen years old in Grade 9 at one of the High schools in Ennerdale.

None of us will ever forget the year 2020. Nor will we forget the coronavirus pandemic. The first term of school went by so fast.

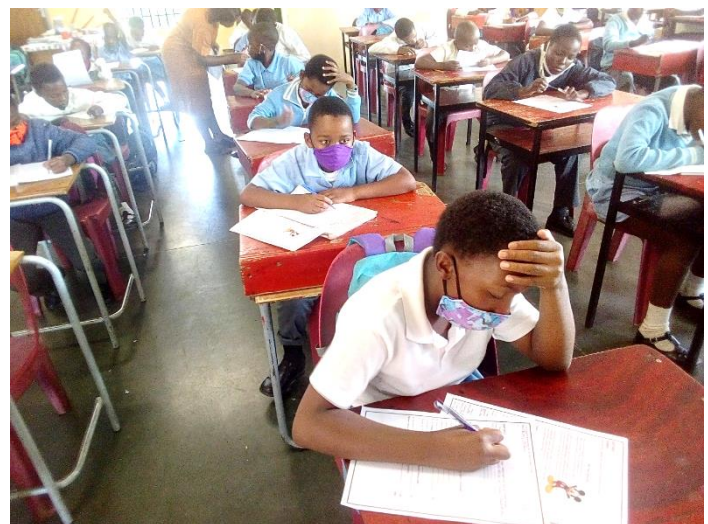
Cases of the virus spread like wild fire across the world. We had to wear masks, scrubize our hands repeatedly and also keep distance from each other. Thousands of people were dying. We had to stay away from school months on end. Oh how I missed school, missed my friends, missed walking.

The shops had to close. Church doors were shut. Everyone had to stay in doors. This was called "lockdown". It was the same routine everyday watching TV, eating and sleeping.

I was glad when we went from level 5 to level 1. The virus isn't over yet. Some people think it is. They move around freely without masks, forgetting about distancing.

I pray that things will go back to normal again.

Exams at Laura Vicuna are tough when children have spent months away from school.



The Children in our Projects wish all our Readers, Donors and Friends a very Happy and Blessed Christmas.



Lockdown Outreach follow up in Ennerdale

Nine months have passed! Our Lockdown Outreach in Ennerdale has been fruitful with

the support of many generous people. We, as Salesian Family, SDB, FMA and Salesian Co-operators have been very actively involved in assisting the needy, the old, children, and the sick of Ennerdale, Finetown and the surrounding areas. This has only been possible due to the great generosity of those who came to our aid from a number of sources.

We thank Denise Hards for her endless efforts through the Salesian Spotlight. For her generous support, concern and assistance in every way. Her presentation of our works helped others to be aware of what we were trying to reach.

Many people have been touched by the food parcels that they received, that enabled them to put food on the table for their families, who were really in a bad way before we received the supply of food to assist them. Many were starving! Such joy was shown, and their gratitude was expressed with their big smiles, tears and in their dancing, clapping and singing when they received their parcels. This gave them **hope!** The fact that others had thought of them touched their hearts. Over 350 Migrant families from our Pupils at Laura Vicuna Primary School in Ennerdale, and Sancta Maria

Pre-School, in Finetown benefitted greatly from the parcels.

Over 40 people were coming to our door each day for sandwiches. We had taken the names of the people and their addresses and had given out four large parcels of food, soap powder and bath soap to each and smaller parcels, on a regular basis to the most needy. We also assisted the most needy in receiving medical help. As the numbers were increasing the neighbours asked us to go to another place to give out food supplies.

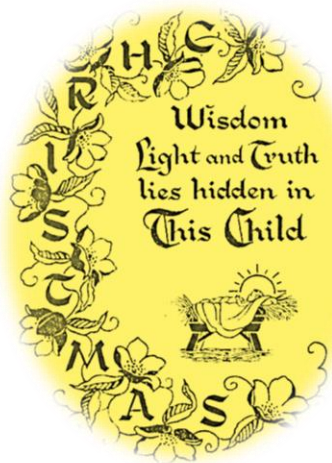
So now we only give children food from the door. We are now delivering parcels at different points to the old, sick and where there are children. This project was supported by Dympna Hannan from Ireland and Denise Hards with the assistance of Cedric and Jessica Poley. There has been a great collaboration of the Salesian Family working together.

The Salesian Co-operators have all come to Laura Vicuna School to assist in packing and distributing the large parcels to the families of our Pupils. Thank you also to The Salesian Spotlight appeal for the tragedy at Sancta Maria Pre-School. We are most grateful.

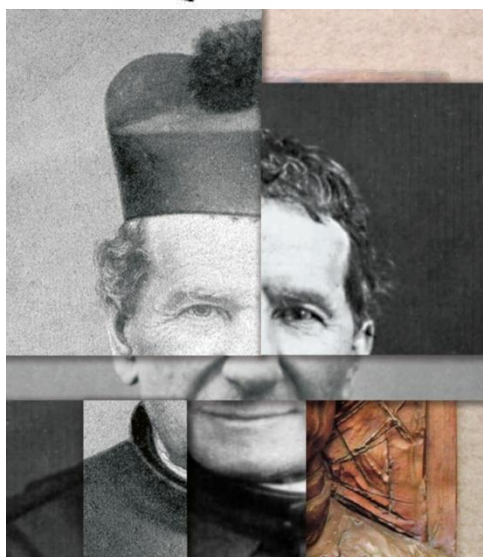
We take this opportunity to thank the supporters of the Salesian Spotlight who have supported our Lockdown Outreach in Ennerdale and Finetown. We assure you of our prayers, that God may bless and reward you for your generosity and kindness. Wishing you every grace and blessing for Christmas and for the New Year, 2021. *Sr Charmaine de la Chaumette FMA*

SANCTA MARIA PRE-SCHOOL NATIVITY PLAY - ENNERDALE





SAINT JOHN BOSCO



St Giovanni Bosco was the first saint in history to be photographed.

There are 42 photographs of Don Bosco; as historical figures, only Garibaldi and Italy's King Vittorio Emanuele II have more. Don Bosco's photos range from 1861 to 1888, the date of his death. In the first photos of 1861 he was ill, and they were taken to keep a memory of him in case he died.

Among the most famous photographs are:

The photo of 1880, made by the photographer M. Schemboche and chosen as the official image of the beatification and canonization.

The photo in Nice in 1885, taken on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the work.

The photo in Sampierdarena on 16 March 1886 commissioned by the Marquis Spinola.

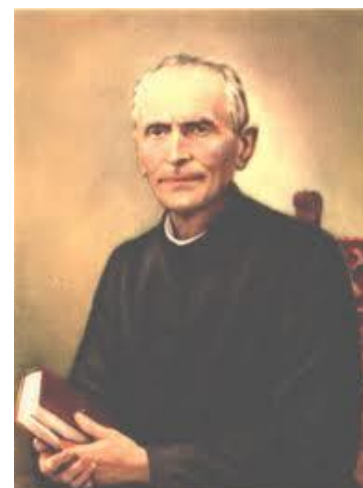
The picture in Marti-Codolar, Barcelona, on 3 May 1886, with Don Bosco smiling surrounded by collaborators and young people. ANS



BLESSED

MICHAEL RUA - DIED 110

YEARS AGO - 110% SALESIAN!



At the explicit request of Don Bosco, Pope Leo XIII designated him to succeed Don Bosco as Rector Major in 1888. Nicknamed "The Living Rule" because of his austere fidelity, Don Rua was also known for his fatherliness and goodness. As the numbers of members and communities increased, he sent Salesians all over the world, showing special care for the missionary expeditions.

In the long journeys which he undertook to visit the Salesian works in Europe and in the Middle East, he was a constant source of comfort and encouragement, always referring to our Founder: "Don Bosco used to say... Don Bosco used to do it this way... Don Bosco wanted us to..."

When he died, on 6th April 1910 at the age of 73 (same age as Don Bosco!), the Society had grown **from 773 to about 4000 Salesians, from 57 to 364 communities [= 1.5 new presence every month during his 22 years as RM!], from 6 to 34 Provinces in 33 countries.**

During the Beatification ceremony on 29th October 1972, Pope Paul VI declared "The Salesian Family had its origin in Don Bosco, its continuity in Don Rua... He made the example of Don Bosco into a school, his Rule into a Spirit, his holiness into a model. He transformed a spring into a river." Newsletter from the Regional Formation Centre in Nairobi -SAFCAM

"In every young person, a point of goodness is accessible, and it is the primary duty of the educator to discover that sensitive cord of the heart so as to draw out the best in the young person." Don Bosco





ACTIVITIES IN LESOTHO – MAPUTSOE AND MASERU



The Salesian Family in Maputsoe witnessed the installation of the new Rector, Fr. John Thompson, at the Salesian community chapel in Maputsoe, Lesotho. This was followed by a festive supper. Fr. Michael Connell, the outgoing rector, was delegated by the provincial to officiate the ceremony. May you be another Don Bosco among the people of Lesotho. Brother Clarence Watts



The Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians celebrated the 125th anniversary of the birth of their founder, Bishop Stephen Ferrando. The Salesian community of Maputsoe, with special guest Right Reverend Augustinus T. Bane OMI, DD, Bishop of Leribe, celebrated the festive occasion with the sisters. As part of the celebrations, Sr. Priscilla Boithabiso, the first MSMHC from Africa, shared 20min on the life of Bishop Ferrando on Radio Maria, live from India where she is currently doing her Philosophy Studies. Congratulations to the sisters and the work they are doing in Southern Africa.

Born on 28 September 1995 in Rossiglione, (Italy) Stephen Ferrando attended the Salesian School in Fossano at first, and then in Turin, Valdocco. Fascinated by the life and motto of Don Bosco, he became a Salesian on 15th September 1912. During the First World War, he rendered four years of military service, and merited a Silver medal. On 18th March 1923, Stephen was ordained a priest and led the third group of Salesian missionaries to North East India, along with a group of novices to be trained. He was Novice Master and Rector for 10 years. On 9 July 1934, Pope Pius XI appointed Fr. Stephen Ferrando as bishop. He was a great visionary. In order to respond to the needs of the Church, he founded the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians on 24th October 1942. Measured by any standard, Stephen Ferrando was a great, pioneer missionary, an outstanding Bishop and the founder of a missionary Congregation of Sisters, called Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians. At his retirement 1969 he was asked to return to his native place, and lived in the Salesian house Genova Quarto 1970 where he died on June 20, 1978. He was buried in the family tomb in Rossiglione. His mortal remains were brought to India and were interred at our Mother house in Shillong in 1987. The diocesan process for his beatification began on 8th October 2003 and ended in 2006. He was declared Venerable by His Holiness Pope Francis in 2016. *Sister Sabrina*



(photos Fr John Thompson)



THE PRICE MAPUTSOE YOUTH PAY TO FIGHT COVID



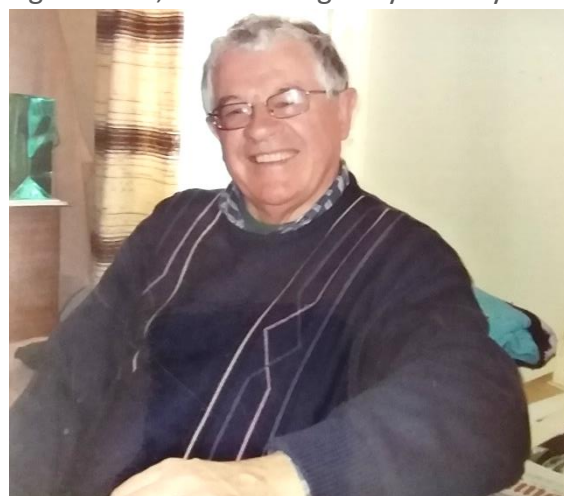
Maputsoe was once a typical small Lesotho village just over the South African border. It now gives its name to 12 conjoined villages making a densely populated industrial area in Lesotho. The Salesians came to the area in 1980 and established St Luke's Salesian Mission which now has a large church serving over 2000 families, 2 primary schools with about 2000 learners, a high school with about 800 learners, a Vocational Training Centre for girls with 80 students, a preschool for about 120 young children, a flourishing daily oratory for about 200 youngsters of all ages. When the lockdown response to Covid 19 struck at the end of March 2020, it knocked out the life of the Mission by closing down everything and emptying the place of its teeming young life.

It is the price St Luke's pays in the fight against Covid 19. While everyone, young and old, pay a big price, the youth are paying a price that will mark them for the rest of their lives.

First of all, there is the general hunger among the youth caused by the loss of the schools' feeding programmes. The poverty caused by loss of employment means that many parents simply cannot adequately feed their children. The monthly handout of a little maize meal to the children of the primary schools is only a little help for a day or two.

Most people live in small houses; the lockdown is an intolerable burden for families. The result has been that groups of youngsters roam around, often robbing shops to get food. If the police catch them, they can only return them to their families that cannot cope. The gang culture and drug culture has attracted many of these "out of control" young people. The future of many young people is being destroyed every day. There are numerous reports of young girls being raped and of some of them becoming pregnant, and of others even entering into early "marriages". Such horrendous experiences usually mean the end of their education. They are faced with a very different future.

Perhaps the children who pay a very big price for the lockdown are the differently challenged youth (the handicapped) of all ages. First of all, they don't understand why their schools are closed. The Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians run a specialized school for them. The usual professional help is no longer available to them for physiotherapy, speech therapy etc. The wide open spaces of the school with its vegetable garden and animals (young



pigs, rabbits, chickens, cats) are a big loss to them. Now they are confined to their homes (sometimes locked in when parents have to be out) with no company and little to eat. Some of these children have been raped, one is pregnant, and boys also have been raped; they are easy prey for evil-minded opportunists.

The children who were at the Salesian Sisters and Missionary Sisters preschools (and at the numerous child-minding private facilities) will be paying into the future; they will start their primary schooling next year without the foundation they would have had, and they will find it very difficult (if not impossible) to survive in large classes of 70 or even 80 children. All this means that young people everywhere are paying a big price in the fight against Covid 19. But the youth of poor families are paying the biggest price and will never be compensated. This is an enormous challenge for Salesians whose priority is the care of poor youth. We ask the prayers and any other help of the readers of the Spotlight.

Father Michael Connell SDB (outgoing Rector of St Luke's Salesian Mission Maputsoe)



Father Michael Connell with families from St. Luke's Mission, and the production of face masks





ESWATINI - MANZINI AND MALKERNS



“The COVID 19 pandemic kept us the MSMHC-Sisters, Mary Clara Topno, Elsa Joseph and Susan Soren busy. Even though there is only partial lock down in the country, our hearts are opened to the needs of our people and our Mission of Evangelization, healing ministry and the works of charity (COVID 19 Relief program). We thank God for protecting us every moment from all harm, danger and from major sickness. We visited the bereaved families of our parishioners during this pandemic. Trusting in our loving Saviour we went to the needy families as the mission beckoned us.

With the generous donation of local benefactors and friends and with the help of volunteers, Pre-school teachers, workers, YAC, Youth, Social apostolate group, village headmen, catechists, leaders from different villages, truck drivers etc...who helped us to unload and pack the food hampers, and the assistance of Malkerns Police officers who helped us with Social distancing. And with every one’s cooperation and assistance **we were able to reach out to 45 villages, 1500 families and 6121 people during the four big distributions of food hampers.**



To mark the 125th Birth anniversary of our Founder, we the MSMHC at Malkerns joined the entire congregation preparing spiritually through nine days novena prayer. We then distributed food hampers to 200 poor families of 6 villages.

We also conducted Festive oratory on 25th September for the children of Malkerns in honour of our Founder’s 125th Birthday.”



Sisters Elsa Joseph, Susan Soren and Mary Clara Topno



OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS - LANSDOWNNE



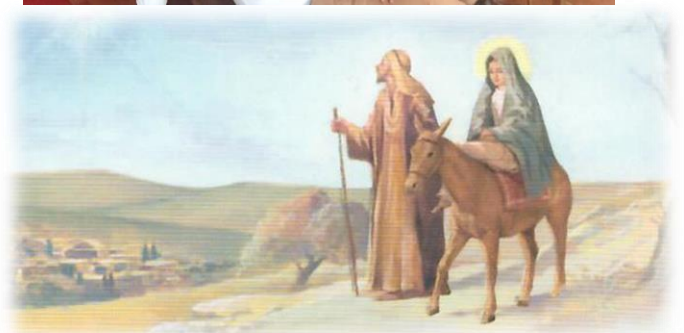
Soup Kitchen
Outreach
in the
communities of
Philippi and Schaapkraal
by the good ladies of
Lansdownne Parish



And in happier times when there were no masks
and no Covid-19. The Don Bosco Choir
Lansdownne 2019



The 'old' badge and
the new one



"So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judaea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with Child." Luke Ch. 2 V. 4



DOWN MEMORY LANE

Father James Melly was born in Simonstown, Cape Town, on the Feast of All Saints. At the age of 17 years, he left home for England, to train as a Salesian Priest. After his theological studies he was ordained in Blaisdon on 14 July 1946. He then returned to his homeland and carried out his priestly duties in many places in the country. He served as Catechist, Teacher, Bursar and Rector in Gauteng, Swaziland and Cape Town, at one time or another.

Father Melly was one of the most kind and generous priests one could wish to meet. He had the most wonderful sense of humour and could cheer a person within seconds of talking to them. He was an extraordinary confessor, and a wonderful friend to have. His irrepressible reply to the question, "How are you Father?" would be "Charming as usual." No one could be miserable while he was around, as he would smile at you and say: "what's the matter fishface?" He could evoke roars of laughter and stand looking on with a serious expression on his face, as the following tale will tell.

Whilst reading the notices after Mass one Sunday morning, he came across a note that had been left for incorporation into the notices. It read: "Your prayers are asked for Mrs..." and he held the note close up and then pushed it further away, while he scrutinised the words; then he said: "That's the trouble with Parish Priests, they don't know how to write." Every parishioner was laughing, including the Parish Priest, who was sitting at the altar, and Father Melly processed out of the church with a straight face and a twinkle in his eye.



hand, it can also prove destructive if used improperly. For this reason, as Bartholomew I stated: "The protection of the common good, of the integrity of the natural environment, is the common responsibility of all inhabitants of the earth." However, even though many individuals have shown their commitment to ecology, nations have not been able to make especially effective decisions for the good of the environment. Pope Francis, in the encyclical "*Laudato Si*", stressed that: "The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; He never forsakes His loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home." (*Laudato si*, 13).

There are many other funny and incredibly beautiful stories which could be told about this resilient priest, but I think that they should rather be written in the annals that St Peter keeps at the Pearly Gates.



Father Melly endured much suffering towards the end of his life. He had a very sweet tooth, but he also had Diabetes, and it was very difficult for him to keep away from sweet things. He had a skin graft on his leg, and it took ages to heal, with daily dressings, but nobody knew the pain that he was in. He was in hospital a number of times, and the humble way he received Holy Communion from the Minister of Communion, was an example to many.

He was transferred to Daleside in the last years of his life, the same place where he had had a bad turn at another priest's funeral. Before his death, he preached on death, in a parish where he was doing supply. He shared his supper with me, and we said goodbye. Father Melly died in his sleep a few months later – glasses still on his nose and book on his chest, on 6 September 1989. There is no doubt that he is now entertaining the angels in heaven. One can almost hear their laughter.... May his dear soul rest in peace.



THE SEASON OF CREATION

(ANS - Vatican City) - The "Season of Creation" is an annual ecumenical event held from 1 September to 4 October and aims to be a moment of prayer and action in favour of our "Common Home". The goal this year is to reconsider ecological, economic, social and political lifestyles. The theme chosen for 2020 is: "Jubilee for the Earth".

The Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, also spoke about the event, affirming: " It is a shared conviction that, in our time, the natural environment is threatened like never before in the history of humankind." While progress has provided great benefits on the one



VOCATIONS – STARVING CHILDREN - PRAISE FROM THE DALAI LAMA – LETTER TO ARGENTINA



Booyens - The Salesian cleric Nhlanhla Nxumalo renewed his temporary vows during the quarterly retreat day spent at the Booyens house in Johannesburg. As part of the day's program, the community also reflected on the "Salesian Rector's Manual" through the reflections led by Father Joy Sebastian. ANS



Vocations are born in prayer and from prayer; only through prayer can they persevere and bear fruit.

Pope Francis



The News from Zambia is that our students, Reece Heuvel and Tefo Stephen Motlemekoane are doing first year Philosophy in Lusaka, and Thabiso Ntlele is doing Novitiate in Kabwe. Reece sent the photos recently showing joyful moments with young people, the philosophy students and a



visit to City of Hope which is run by the Salesian sisters. In the picture above we have from left to right Thabiso, Tefo and Reece. Brother Clarence Watts



VATICAN NEWS:

67,000 African children risk death from starvation before the end of the year, due to circumstances compounded by Covid-19. This claim is made by the international charity, Save the Children, which means that 426 children risk death every day.

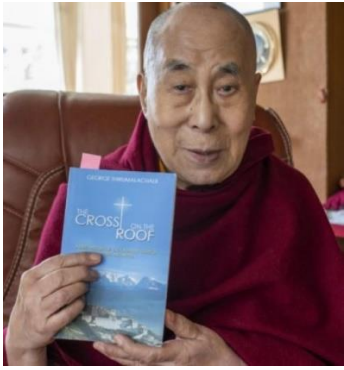


ALL SAINTS - ENNERDALE

The young people of the Salesian Youth Movement (SYM) of Johannesburg gathered in the hall of the "All Saints" church in Ennerdale to reflect on Pope Francis' message for World Mission Day. The Mass that accompanied the meeting was celebrated by Fr Vincent Hoang, SDB, a Vietnamese missionary who has been working in the Vice Province of Southern Africa (AFM) for 13 years.



Nepal - Dalai Lama praises Salesian Fr George Thirumalachalil's book on missionaries in Tibet and Nepal



The Dalai Lama, the highest theocratic authority in Tibet, expressed great appreciation for a book by Fr George Thirumalachalil, a Salesian, on the history of the Catholic Church in Nepal, Tibet, and several states of India.

The 235-page book, entitled "Cross on the Roof" is a brief history of the Catholic Church in Tibet and Nepal. It was published by the Salesian Institute of Sonada in collaboration with the Nepal Don Bosco Society in Kathmandu. The book narrates the missionary expeditions from the 18th century and the attempt to make the Gospel known in Tibet, the traditional centre of Buddhism, and in Nepal, the only Hindu kingdom in the world. In Nepal, four missionary stations were opened headed by the Capuchins, who

remained there from 1715 to 1769.

The Salesians started their mission in Nepal many years later, in 1992. Today they are well established in the country with 21 religious from five Indian Provinces serving 7 presences. In Nepal, the Salesians have decided to contribute to and disseminate Christian literature and, precisely for this reason, the book by Fr George Thirumalachalil, published last October 18, was sent to the Dalai Lama, who has always been interested in Christian history. **(ANS - Kathmandu) -**



Fr. George Thirumalachalil is a missionary in Darjeeling, India but lives in West Nepal. With his master's in education, he continues to bring hope and a better tomorrow to those less fortunate.



POPE FRANCIS SENDS A LETTER TO HIS OLD SCHOOL



(ANS Ramos Mejía, Argentina) Due to the 90th anniversary of the foundation of the Salesian school "Wilfrid Barón de los Santos Ángeles" in Ramos Mejía, Argentina - where the young Jorge Mario Bergoglio attended sixth grade in 1949 - Pope Francis has sent a letter to the deputy director general of the work, Daniel Joaquin Blanco Mengoni. Below is the text of the letter.

Dear brother,

On the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the



foundation of the Work of Don Bosco in Ramos Mejía, I turn to you and to all the members of this beloved Salesian family. I join in your thanks for all these years spent sowing the joy of the Gospel in so many children and young people, and in reaching the hearts of so many families and the peripheries of society. I remember with gratitude when I attended the sixth grade of the Wilfrid Barón de los Santos Ángeles school in 1949, and received that formation in the style of Don Bosco, open to work, creativity and joy. School life was a "whole", and there was no time to get bored: study, sharing, prayer, attention to the poorest, manual activities; everything we did and learned had a harmonious unity and prepared us for life with a sense of responsibility and a horizon of transcendence. I encourage you to continue your daily work in this perspective, bearing in mind the words of St. John Bosco: "Holiness consists in always being happy". May the joy that comes from the encounter with the Lord be reflected in all your activities, so that the Gospel may radiate and reach everyone. May Jesus bless you and Mary Help of Christians watch over you with maternal protection. And please don't forget to pray for me.

Fraternally,

Francis



Prayers Please



For Maureen, whose husband died recently.
For a family who are experiencing a Satanic influence.
For Connie who is suffering with cancer.
For a Priest who is to undergo an operation.
For an end to the pandemic.
For all Readers, Donors and Friends of the Spotlight.
For a mother with 3 children whose husband is a drug addict.
For those who have been retrenched and have no money.
For the starving children and families, the world over.
For all women who are used and abused.
For children who suffer at the hands of abusive adults.
For the protection of Our Blessed Mother and Her Son.
For all carers, nurses, doctors and those in religion who help without expecting thanks.
For peace in our country and in the world.
For an end to corruption in our Government.
For all those who have gone before us. May they rest in peace.

“Almighty, ever-living God, whose love surpasses all that we ask or deserve, open up for us the treasures of your mercy. Forgive us all that weighs on our conscience, and grant us more even than we dare to ask. Through Christ our Lord. Amen



Letter from County Cork, Ireland

This has been a most unusual and traumatic year and many people are suffering as a result. For us, the worst part of Covid-19 is the fact that we have

had no Mass or Sacraments. The Churches are open for a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, but that is all. All sporting activities, hurling and football, have been cancelled and pubs and restaurants are closed due to the lockdown.

But life must go on and we think of and envy the beautiful weather you are currently having in South Africa. We remember how we supported the Springboks and were delighted when they won. We hold dear in our hearts all friends and memories of your lovely country.

Elizabeth Donovan
(niece of the late Father Patrick Ahern SDB).



An Advent Poem by John Bell

Light looked down and saw
the darkness
“I will go there” said light.
Peace looked down and saw war.
“I will go there said peace”.
Love looked down and saw hatred.
“I will go there”, said love.
So he, The Lord of Light,
The Prince of Peace,
The King of love,
Came down and crept in beside us.





SALESIANS

On my desk I happily display a beautiful somewhat heavy silver Medal, in a smart velvet casing, with the inscription “Associazione missioni Don Bosco, Torino” asking God’s blessing on all benefactors. This I treasure even more than my gold medal awarded me by Rotary.

My happy association with the Salesian fathers goes back many many years in this archdiocese of Cape Town. In studying the life of St. Francis de Sales and his famous book, “Introduction to the devout life,” I came to understand why Don Bosco so admired this saint (1567- 1622) and used his “de Sales” to name his followers Salesian, a name that now echoes in many mission territories throughout this troubled world. Saint Francis de Sales was known to be gentle, meek and humble which won him the title the “gentleman saint”! **Father Bosco**, an Italian priest (1815-1888) had a new vision. He turned his gaze to the streets where the lives of young boys were being wasted while the Industrial revolution - with that gigantic surge from hand production to machines - was changing all society. Don Bosco was a man of action with his fatherly love for young boys, fatherless, homeless, neglected, and very poor, and so began his technical and vocational training of the young, always inspired by the zeal of St Francis de Sales, “One can attract more flies with a spoonful of honey than with a barrelful of vinegar.” Another axiom he surely shared with the saint was “give me souls, the rest take away.” In the later years, Pope Pius XI described the mind of Don Bosco: “In his life the supernatural became the natural and the extraordinary . became ordinary.”



On my regular visits to the Salesian community in the vicinity of Green Point I witnessed the realization of Don Bosco’s dream - the young boys being trained in Tailoring, Printing, Bookbinding and the rest. I have always admired the parish work of the Salesian Fathers in their huge Mitchells Plain parishes. How we all love that beautiful parish church “Our Lady Help of Christians” in Lansdowne. And it was in that church, because of my broadcasting association with the SABC over many years, that we were permitted to offer a live one-hour TV Eucharistic service to the nation - and it was magnificent! I am indeed blessed to have so many Salesian priests and brothers as my friends, those who have served this archdiocese with such zeal, devotion and enthusiasm. May they experience yet many blessings and zealous vocations.

Father Ralph de Hahn

Joyful

Greetings!



Dear Friends

I am sure that you will all agree that this has been a very traumatic and difficult year for everybody, and especially for those who have lost family or loved ones. Many conspiracy theories and much false



news has frightened many, and there has been much discussion on whether to be vaccinated or not, if and when it arrives in this country. However, trust in the good Lord and His Mercy, is the only answer. In so many of her appearances around the world, Our Blessed Lady tells us to say the Rosary and to trust and love her Son.

Christmas is around the corner and there are so many beautiful readings in the Gospels and the Old Testament, describing the coming of the Saviour. Perhaps instead of dwelling on the strange and weird Whatsapps, emails and messages that we receive, we could rather read some of the Scripture each day. And perhaps fill our minds with decorating our cribs at home, promoting family peace, and making the world a better place for others to live in. Giving to others is such a pleasure, as the happiness that you give, is returned a hundredfold. Even the gracious smile that is received in thanks, is so uplifting.

Once again, I need to tell you all how much we appreciate your prayers, donations and loyal support. From the widow’s mite to the large sums; from the anonymous donations to the monthly debit orders; we are sincerely, so grateful. I hope that you all enjoy reading this newsletter, and that you gain some good from it.

May Our Blessed Lady place her mantle round you all and keep you safe; and may the Infant Jesus bring much joy and peace into your lives in the New Year. Pray for me please as I do for you. Much love Denise

CHUCKLE For those of my generation who do not, and cannot, comprehend why Facebook exists: I am trying to make friends outside of Facebook while applying the same principles. Therefore, every day I walk down the street and tell passers-by what I have eaten, how I feel at the moment, what I have done the night before, what I will do later and with whom. I give them pictures of my family, my dog and of me gardening, taking things apart in the garage, watering the lawn, standing in front of landmarks, driving around town, having lunch, and doing what anybody and everybody does every day. I also listen to their conversations, give them “thumbs up” and tell them, I “like” them. And it works just like Facebook. I already have people following me: 2 police officers, a private investigator and a psychiatrist.

VATICAN CITY, DEC 8, 2020. POPE FRANCIS ANNOUNCED A YEAR OF ST. JOSEPH



in honour of the 150th anniversary of the saint's proclamation as patron of the Universal Church. The year begins Dec. 8, 2020, and concludes on Dec. 8, 2021, according to a decree authorized by the pope.

The decree said that Francis had established a Year of St. Joseph so that "every member of the faithful, following his example, may strengthen their life of faith daily in the complete fulfilment of God's will." It added that the pope had granted special indulgences to mark the year.

In addition to the decree, Francis issued an apostolic letter dedicated to the foster father of Jesus. The pope explained in the letter, entitled *Patris corde* ("With a father's heart") and dated Dec. 8, that he wanted to share some "personal reflections" on the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. "My desire to do so increased during these months of pandemic," he said, noting that many people had made hidden sacrifices during the crisis in order to protect others. "Each of us can discover in Joseph -- the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence -- an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble," he wrote. "St. Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation."

Pope Pius IX proclaimed St. Joseph patron of the Universal Church on Dec. 8, 1870, in the decree *Quemadmodum Deus*. In his apostolic letter, Pope

Child was not his own but had merely been entrusted to his care."

Pope Francis has promoted devotion to St. Joseph throughout his pontificate. He began his petrine ministry on March 19, 2013, the Solemnity of St. Joseph, and dedicated the homily at his inauguration Mass to the saint. "In the Gospels, St. Joseph appears as a strong and courageous man, a working man, yet in his heart we see great tenderness, which is not the virtue of the weak but rather a sign of strength of spirit and a capacity for concern, for compassion, for genuine openness to others, for love," he said.

His coat of arms features a spikenard, which is associated with St. Joseph in Hispanic iconographic tradition. On May 1, 2013, the pope authorized a decree instructing that St. Joseph's name be inserted into Eucharistic Prayers II, III, and IV. During an apostolic visit to the Philippines in 2015, the pope explained why he kept an image of the saint on his desk. "I would also like to tell you something very personal," he said. "I have great love for St. Joseph, because he is a man of silence and strength."

"On my table I have an image of St. Joseph sleeping. Even when he is asleep, he is taking care of the Church! Yes! We know that he can do that. So, when I have a problem, a difficulty, I write a little note and I put it underneath St. Joseph, so that he can dream about it! In other words, I tell him: pray for this problem!" At his general audience on March 18 this year, he said. "Always invoke him, especially in difficult times and entrust your life to this great saint."

The pope concluded his new apostolic letter by urging Catholics to pray to St. Joseph for "the grace of graces: our conversion." He ended the text with a prayer: "Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. To you God entrusted his only Son; in you Mary placed her trust; with you Christ became man. Blessed Joseph, to us too, show yourself a father and guide us in the path of life. Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage, and defend us from every evil. Amen."

Francis reflected on the fatherly qualities of St. Joseph, describing him as beloved, tender and loving, obedient, accepting, and "creatively courageous." He also underlined that he was a working father. The pope referred to the saint as "a father in the shadows," citing the novel "The Shadow of the Father," published by the Polish author Jan Dobraczyński in 1977. He said that Dobraczyński, who was declared Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem in 1993 for protecting Jewish children in Warsaw in World War II, "uses the evocative image of a shadow to define Joseph." "In his relationship to Jesus, Joseph was the earthly shadow of the heavenly Father: he watched over Him and protected Him, never leaving Him to go his own way," the pope wrote.

Pope Francis said that the contemporary world required examples of true fatherhood. "Our world today needs fathers. It has no use for tyrants who would domineer others as a means of compensating for their own needs," he wrote. "It rejects those who confuse authority with authoritarianism, service with servility, discussion with oppression, charity with a welfare mentality, power with destruction." "Every true vocation is born of the gift of oneself, which is the fruit of mature sacrifice. The priesthood and consecrated life likewise require this kind of maturity. Whatever our vocation, whether to marriage, celibacy or virginity, our gift of self will not come to fulfilment if it stops at sacrifice; were that the case, instead of becoming a sign of the beauty and joy of love, the gift of self would risk being an expression of unhappiness, sadness and frustration."

He continued: "When fathers refuse to live the lives of their children for them, new and unexpected vistas open up. Every child is the bearer of a unique mystery that can only be brought to light with the help of a father who respects that child's freedom. A father who realizes that he is most a father and educator at the point when he becomes 'useless,' when he sees that his child has become independent and can walk the paths of life unaccompanied. When he becomes like Joseph, who always knew that his





80 YEARS AND GOING STRONG HAPPY BIRTHDAY FATHER PAT

Father Pat Naughton turned 80 on 23 November. He was treated to a well-deserved and wonderful party, with a beautiful birthday cake, by the ladies at the Institute. The years have flown by and as we say, 'old age is not for sissies.' Considering his age, he has done some amazing work at the Salesian Institute in Cape Town, in the last few years. He has been Rector in a number of Salesian houses and has done a stint as Provincial, some years back. Encouragement and delegation are the name of the game in his dealings with staff and numerous other people. A good Pastor and Priest, his spiritual encouragement has invited many a person to think twice about their role in life. His great Irish sense of humour has kept him going through many trials during the years, and as we say *Ad Multos Annos*, we also say *God bless you Father Pat*, and *Dia dhaoibh. Go n-ardoidh an bother chun bualadh leat.*



Many people mourned the death of **Father Emil Blaser**, pioneer of Radio Veritas, and son of a wonderful mother who lived in Cape Town all her life. This kindly gentleman and deeply spiritual Priest went to his eternal reward, after much suffering, on 16 November. May his dear soul rest in peace.

"AND MARY WRAPPED HIM IN SWADDLING CLOTHES AND LAID HIM IN A MANGER"

"May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make His Face to shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up His Countenance on you and give you His Peace."



FEAST DAYS

- 08 Dec Immaculate Conception
- 25 Dec Nativity of Our Lord
- 27 Dec Holy Family
- 01 Jan Mary Mother of God
- 03 Jan Epiphany
- 10 Jan Baptism of Our Lord
- 24 Jan St Francis de Sales
- 31 Jan St John Bosco
- 02 Feb Presentation of Our Lord
- 17 Feb Ash Wednesday
- 17 Mar St Patrick
- 19 Mar St Joseph
- 25 Mar Annunciation
- 28 Mar Palm Sunday

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

Perhaps you would like to leave something to Salesian Missions in your Will. An enquiry can be made, and the necessary form can be sent to you. Tel: 27 (0) 11 476 8315 We would be extremely grateful.

Kindly fill in your Name, Address, Telephone Number and Email

Please pass this on to a friend if you don't need it!



SALESIAN MISSIONS

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- Monthly Once only
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- Bank:Branch Code:
- Branch name:
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