

Salesian Missions

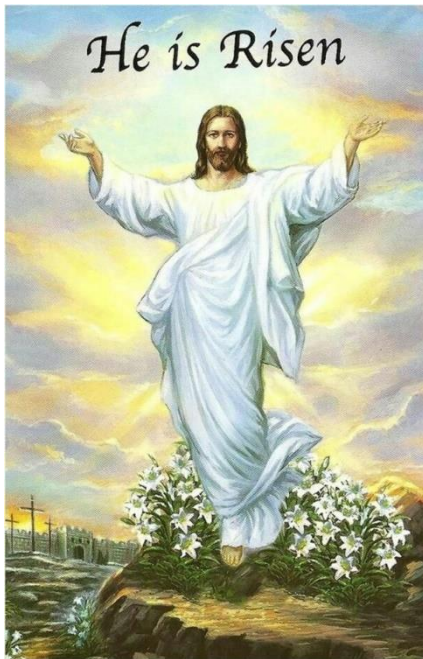
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SALESIAN SPOTLIGHT

EASTER 2021



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



*We wish all our Readers,
Donors and Friends a happy
and meaningful Easter.
With prayerful wishes from
Salesian Missions.*



IN A NEARLY EMPTY ST. PETER'S BASILICA, POPE FRANCIS celebrated Easter in virtual solitude on Sunday, calling for the world to come together in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. The world is "oppressed by a pandemic severely testing our whole human family," the Pope said, according to a translation provided by the Vatican. In the midst of that suffering, Pope Francis said, the message that Christ has risen is: "the contagion of hope."

"For many, this is an Easter of solitude lived amid the sorrow and hardship that the pandemic is causing, from physical suffering to economic difficulties. May Jesus, our Passover, grant strength and hope to doctors and nurses, who everywhere offer a witness of care and love for our neighbours, to the point of exhaustion and not infrequently at the expense of their own health."

The surreal service, which was streamed live to millions around the world, echoed similar ceremonies throughout the world, held in front of empty pews as congregants stayed home and watched over the internet.

"Dear brothers and sisters, indifference, self-centeredness, division and forgetfulness are not words we want to hear at this time. We want to ban these words forever. They seem to prevail when fear and death overwhelm us, that is, when we do not let the Lord Jesus triumph in our hearts and lives. May Christ, who has already defeated death and opened for us the way to eternal salvation, dispel the darkness of our suffering humanity and lead us into the light of his glorious day, a day that knows no end. With these reflections, I would like to wish you all a happy Easter." *Easter Message 2020*



Presentation of the Strenna 2021

"Thinking about the message that can unite us as a Salesian Family in this year 2021, it is impossible not to take into account that for many months, to a greater or lesser extent, the world, all nations have remained, if not paralyzed (although many are), certainly blocked," begins the Rector Major in his presentation text of the Strenna. At the same time, "our message underlines and reaffirms that, faced with this harsh and painful reality with its heavy consequences, we continue to express the certainty of being moved by hope: because God in His Spirit continues to make 'all things new.'"

Here, then, the Strenna will serve to propose a Salesian reading of the present time in order to learn alternative processes to the dominant culture, capable of achieving a change of values and vision. And to maintain Salesian concreteness, to propose, at the same time, places and situations, where "to learn and exercise hope." All this while allowing oneself to be accompanied by Mary, Mother of God and Star of Hope. *Father Ángel Fernández Artime. ANS*

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE 'WAY OF LIGHT' (THE STATIONS AFTER THE RESURRECTION) IS ON OUR WEBSITE IN ENGLISH, AFRIKAANS, FRENCH, SeSOTHO AND ZULU www.salesianmissions.co.za

SALESIANS SAY FAREWELL TO ROBERTSHAM PARISH



The Salesians of Don Bosco have served the St John Bosco Parish Robertsham faithfully since 1957. The parish will now be transferred from the care of the Salesians, to the Diocese. The fact of this transfer came as a great shock to me, as I am sure it will for many of you. However, this disappointment is not something to lose our Faith over. Faith is a God given gift and not something that we can pick up and throw down just because we are unhappy. We can blame this transfer on the Pandemic, on the short-staffed Salesian Community, or the lack of vocations from the Parish. We can blame it on the signs of the times or on someone we did or didn't like. We can blame it on the system. But the tragedy is that many of our Salesian Priests are ageing, the younger Priests and Brothers are involved with the projects, and as you know a thriving parish, like Robertsham, requires an enormous amount of energy to run. As a tribute to the sojourn in our lives, of this lovely Parish, I have put together a bit of its history.



In the 1950's many Catholic people living in Robertsham, Crown Gardens and Ridgeway had to travel several miles to get to Mass on Sundays. Most of them attended Holy Family Catholic Church in Turffontein, or St. Patrick's Catholic Church in La Rochelle, where many catholic children went to the Dominican Convent next door.

The Parish was founded in 1957, after the Salesians of Don Bosco were tasked with building a church in the Southern Suburbs of Johannesburg. More specifically at 18 Dorchester Street in Robertsham. Prior to this, some Catholics in the area had attended Mass in the small Salesian chapel known as Ozanam House in Nelson Road, Booyens. This was during the time of **Father Gerald Libera**. It was the former home of mining magnate, Sir Abe Bailey, and was built in 1903. The Convent of the Salesian Sisters, who also ran the Mary Help of Christians Pre-school and Junior Primary School, is across the road.



The initial 'church' building, in Robertsham, was a hall and it was consecrated by the late Right Reverend Bishop Boyle in late 1957. Under the able guidance of **Father William Tate** the Parish slowly started to grow. Father Tate was there for about 2 years. He initially lived at the Salesian House at Booyens, and then in the garage on the premises in Dorchester Street. Meals were taken to him by one of the parishioner's daughters. **Father George Bolger** took over when Father Tate was transferred. He was rather a stern man, but had a very kind heart. He would walk all the way into Johannesburg city for exercise. One of his sermons during Lent was that when he wiped the small ants from behind the altar they would become just like dust, as would happen to each of us on our deaths. When a child confessed to eating meat on Friday, he asked the reason why, and the answer was that that was all her mother had. "That's no sin my child, go in peace," he said.



Following Father Bolger's term of almost 10 years other Salesian Priests followed. During the time of **Fathers Joe Nolan, K Dean, Michael Brassil and Dan Lyons**, from 1968 to 1977, the first Parish Council was formed. A much-needed parish house was built while funds were still being raised for the new church. **Father Michael Egan** came next and he had the turn of



phrase, "We have met before?!" when he couldn't remember a person's name. Helping Father Egan were **Father James Melly and Father Andrew Wills and Father Eoin Farrelly**, who was responsible for the "Community Serving Humanity Programme;"



During all this time the **Salesian Sisters (FMA)** were hard at work



with catechetics for the children whose parents could not afford to send them to Catholic Schools. Many will remember **Sister Colleen** who ran the Catechetical Programme for many years and after she went to her eternal reward, the baton was passed to **Sister Patricia Finn**. The Sisters started a Folk Choir, and the young people came in their droves with their musical instruments, to play, while Tommy Dell (he was a Country and Western Singer) sang along with them. They also had a Youth Group called Arriva la Pace (Come in Peace). Many concerts were had. In one of them, Father Melly dressed up as a lady called Myrtle, sang and danced



and then when bowing removed his wig, to the delight of all present. And as well as all these extraordinary activities, they also handled the Pre and Primary Schools in Booyens, as well as the Lerato Pre and Primary School. Some of those wonderful Sisters who worked so hard to keep the youth on the right path, were: **Sister Mary Margaret Walsh; Sister Antonia de Oliviera; Sisters Helen Fitzgibbon and Helen Hartnett; Sister Carmel Crannie and Colleen Van Heerden; Sister Maura Hickey and Charmaine de la Chaumette.** There was unity and such a nice spirit between the Salesian Fathers and Sisters.



Father Patrick Ahern, assisted by **Father Melly**, succeeded Father Egan and he introduced the Assistant Ministers of the Eucharist, the Legion of Mary and the League of Margharita. He also spent a great part of his life visiting the Parishioners in the surrounding areas. He had the great ability to double and sometimes triple book, appointments – marriage talks, convert classes and sick calls. **Fathers Thomas Donaghy, Vincent Ford** (who organised the Renew Programme), and **Ivo Piscane** took over from Father Ahern.



After years of fund-raising through Planned Giving, it was decided in 2000 to rather renovate, enlarge and modernize the old church. This project, under the Pastorship of **Father Canice Dooley**, was completed in December 2000 and the church was consecrated by the late Right Reverend Reginald Orsmond, Bishop of Johannesburg, on 21 March 2001.



Fathers Michael Power, Jeffrey Johnson, Eugene Hennessy and John Thompson worked in the Parish from 1998 to 2018. **Father Timothy Wrenn** is the current Parish Priest.

Most of the Priests who served St John Bosco Parish in Robertsham, were ably assisted from 1983 to the current year by: **Deacon Garry Connellan RIP** (who was responsible for the CLG Programme in the Parish), **Deacons David Lavers, Michael Nolan RIP and Victor Ho.**

A Garden of Remembrance was opened in 2003 and this has provided Parishioners with a safe place for depositing ashes of deceased loved ones. The house on 20 Dorchester Street, adjacent to the Church, was refurbished as the Youth Centre, and doubles up as a meeting venue for other sodalities and committees.

During these many years of service to the community, there were many visitors to the Priests' House, from overseas and locally. Apart from the visitors from Booyens and Daleside (now Bosco Randvaal), the then Provincial Father Joe Harrington from Ireland, spent some time there, as well as did Father Martin McPake from Rome, both of happy memory. We had the wonderful visit of the Relic of Don Bosco in July 2012 and two Rector Majors, Father Pascual Chavez and Father Angel Artime, who visited in March 2019.



Since 1957, the parish has continued to grow in God's Grace with many baptisms, first communions, confirmations, marriages, burials, liturgical events, missions and other social gatherings having taken place. All this would not have been possible without the dedicated service of the Priests, Deacons, Sisters and Parishioners.



St John Bosco, Robertsham, has had its saints and its sinners. It started in a small way for the many poor

people in the area and is steeped in 63 years of history. I have tried to consolidate this all into 2 pages. I hope that what I have penned brings back many happy memories for all of you. Maybe you can fill me in, on much I am sure, that I have left out. I would be grateful. *Denise Hards*



**SALESIANS
CELEBRATING
158 YEARS
WORKING
WITH
CHILDREN
AND YOUTH
THE WORLD
OVER**



Whatever you do, think of the Glory of God as your main goal. St John Bosco



LANSDOWNE'S GENEROUS COMMUNITY

The Ladies, and children from Lansdowne and Hanover Park Parishes made 1080 Cupcakes which were donated to: Christine Reveu Children's Home; Nazareth House; Marsh Memorial; Holy Cross Children's Home; Lelieblom House; Heaven's Nest Children's Home; Saint Francis Children's Home; SOS Children's Home; St Michael's Children's Home. Salesian Co-operators and members of St. Vincent de Paul Society distributed 280 Christmas hampers for the poor.



Prayers Please

For an end to the pandemic.
 For all Readers, Donors and Friends of the Spotlight.
 For those who have been retrenched.
 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 Connie, Caroline and all who have cancer.
 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 the people of Myanmar.
 For peace in our country and in the world.
 For an end to corruption in our Government.
 For Fr. Pat's brother Michael who died 23 February, and
 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.



Dear Friends

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. My thanks



also, to the lady who prints this newsletter, Lyn; and to those wonderful people who distribute it – Cynthia Maggott and her daughter Colleen. May the Risen Lord bless you all this Easter and throughout the rest of the year. May Our Blessed Lady keep you all safe under her mantle, as we travel into the unknown. Much love to you all. Denise Hards.

Short Chuckle: When my three-year-old son opened the birthday gift from his grandmother, he discovered a water pistol. He squealed with delight and headed for the nearest sink. I was not so pleased. I turned to mom and said, "I'm surprised at you. Don't you remember how we used to drive you crazy with water guns?" Mom smiled and then replied.... "I remember!!"



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YES! I want to support the Salesian work with needy youth!



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A/C HOLDER – SALESIAN MISSIONS

FEAST DAYS

01 Apr Holy Thursday
 02 Apr Good Friday
 04 Apr Easter Sunday
 11 Apr Divine Mercy Sunday
 29 Apr St Catherine of Siena
 06 May St Dominic Savio
 13 May Our Lady of Fatima
 St Mary Mazzarello
 16 May Ascension of Our Lord
 23 May Pentecost
 24 May Mary Help of Christians
 27 May St Augustine
 30 May The Most Holy Trinity

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 information can be given to you.

Tel: 27 (0) 11 476 8315

We would be extremely grateful.