

ASSOCIATION OF SALESIAN COOPERATORS SUO

THE CORD



”a three-ply cord is hard to break.”

Don Bosco

JANUARY 2025



INSIDE

THIS ISSUE:

From Our Coordinator	2
Of Special Interest	3
Province Animation	8
Province News	10
Province Formation	12
Youth Ministry	13
In Memoriam	17

LINKS OF INTEREST

[Salesians - SUO Province](#)
[In Touch](#)
[ANS](#)
[Salesian Sisters West](#)
[Strenna](#)
[Laudato Si](#)
[Patris Corde](#)
[Amoris Laetitia](#)



Strenna 2025

FROM OUR COORDINATOR

Letter from the Province Coordinator

Alex del Carmen, Ph.D.

Dear Salesian Family,

As we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we are invited to pause and reflect on the profound significance of this holy season through the spiritual legacy of our beloved founder, Saint John Bosco. For Don Bosco, Christmas was not merely a historical commemoration but a living reality—a moment to experience God's boundless love for humanity and renew our commitment to bringing Christ to the hearts of young people.

At the heart of the Christmas story is a scene of humility: the King of Heaven born in a simple manger, surrounded by the quiet presence of His mother Mary, Saint Joseph, and the lowly shepherds. This humble beginning reflects the core of Don Bosco's mission. He saw Christ in the faces of the poor, the abandoned, and the vulnerable youth of his time. In every boy he served, he recognized the divine dignity bestowed upon us by the Incarnation—God made flesh to dwell among us.

Don Bosco often reminded us that the crib of Bethlehem is a school of virtues. From the child Jesus, we learn the humility of God, the joy of simplicity, and the call to trust in divine providence. In his work with youth, Don Bosco strove to model these virtues, creating spaces where young people could experience the joy of being loved and the hope of a future filled with purpose and grace. For Don Bosco, Christmas was an invitation to look beyond our human frailty and glimpse the transformative power of God's love—a love that breaks into our brokenness and makes us whole.

As Salesian Cooperators, we are called to bring the light of Bethlehem into our communities, particularly to the young and the marginalized. The Salesian charism challenges us to see Christ in the young, to accompany them with the tenderness of Mary, and to inspire them with the trust and confidence that Don Bosco placed in God's plan. This Christmas, let us renew our commitment to being signs and bearers of God's love to those around us, especially those most in need of hope and joy.

Let us also remember the special role of Mary Help of Christians in Don Bosco's spirituality. Just as she guided the shepherds and wise men to her Son, she guides us in our mission to lead young people to Christ. In her, we find the strength and courage to persevere in our work, trusting that she intercedes for us and blesses the efforts we make in her Son's name.

This holy season offers us the opportunity to reflect on the gifts we have received and how we, in turn, can share those gifts with others. Through the simple acts of kindness, a listening ear, or an



encouraging word, we embody the spirit of Christmas and the legacy of Don Bosco.

May the Christ Child, born in Bethlehem, fill your hearts with peace, your homes with joy, and your work with abundant grace. Together, let us continue to bring the hope of Christmas to the world, living our vocation as Salesian Cooperators with renewed zeal and faith.

Wishing you a blessed and joyous Christmas!

In Don Bosco,

Alex del Carmen

OF SPECIAL INTEREST



To find out the story behind the artwork click [here](#).

(ANS – Rome) – Renewing an ancient and prestigious tradition dating back to the time of Don Bosco, the Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr Stefano Martoglio, at the head of the Salesian Congregation from 17 August 2024 (Art. 143 of the Constitution), is preparing to offer his thoughts on the Strenna for the new year to all the Salesians and members of the Salesian Family around the world. The theme for 2025, chosen last July in collaboration with Card. Ángel Fernández Artime, 10th Successor of Don Bosco, is: “Anchored in hope, pilgrims with young people”.

The document prepared by Fr Martoglio essentially deals with the themes of hope and mission, in this way intertwining the great events – ecclesial and Salesian – of 2025: the Jubilee and the 150th anniversary of the First Salesian Missionary Expedition.

In the first part, the 2025 Jubilee is presented as a pilgrimage to Christ, a source of hope for the Church and the world. The theological meaning of hope is explored, describing it as a path to Christ and eternal life, and which is characterised as a virtue marked by continuous tension, prophetic vision, momentum towards the future and public dimension.

The Congregation's missionary impetus is derived from

hope in Christ, where the mission becomes an expression of Don Bosco's educational and pastoral charity, inspired by the motto *Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*; and where the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the First Salesian Missionary Expedition leads to a reflection on the attitudes of the being sent/missionary and on the threefold invitation of this celebration: to give thanks, rethink and relaunch.

The jubilee and missionary hope is then grounded in its practical implications: hope as the strength to face everyday life, the hope that demands testimony and patience, the hope that allows to promote the future through an active and constant commitment in their communities.

Finally, the origins of hope are examined, with its roots in God and in the spiritual legacy of Don Bosco; and the "fruits" of hope proper to Salesian spirituality are indicated, such as joy, patience and educational commitment.

All this then leaves room for a conclusion that goes back to Don Bosco, relying on Mary Help of Christians and on her being a model of hope and trust, a fundamental reference point for the Christian journey and in the Salesian mission.

[STRENNA 2025](#)

[STRENNA 2025 VIDEO](#)

OF SPECIAL INTEREST

For all Southern California Cooperators

SALESIAN COOPERATOR DAY OF RETREAT

You are invited to begin the new year
renewing your Salesian Cooperator
vocation in unity with
other Cooperators
and enriched by the 2025 Strenna.



18 January, 2025
Saturday



8:30 AM
- 1:30 PM



Salesian Mission Center
416 S. St. Louis Street
Los Angeles, CA 90033
(Formerly St. Mary's School and Convent)

SCHEDULE

8:30 AM

Gather and Morning Hospitality

9 AM

Good Morning and Warm-Ups

9:30 AM

Strenna 2025: Anchored in Hope - Pilgrims with the Young

English: Bro. Al Vu, SDB, Province Coordinators of Schools

Spanish: Fr. Fabian Cardenas, SDB, Province Delegate for Youth Ministry

10:30 AM

BREAK

10:45 AM

Mission Center Presentation and Tour

Fr Peter Duoc Le, SDB, Mission Center Coordinator

11:30 AM

Small Group Brainstorming

11:45 AM

Large Group Response

12 PM

LUNCH

12:45 PM

Celebration of Eucharist

1:30 PM

Dismissal

Please RSVP to your Local Coordinator by Sunday, January 12,
to allow for preparation of seating, food, and supplies.

OF SPECIAL INTEREST



**Salesian
FAMILY
DAY**

SUNDAY
Jan. 12, 2025
9 am - 2 pm

ST. JOHN BOSCO SCHOOL
SAN ANTONIO, TX

Register by Jan 7th at salesiansisterswest.org

You are invited to participate in the Texas Salesian Family Day on Sunday, January 12, 2025! This event is for Salesian friends and family of all ages. Experience Mass, fellowship, music, games, and entertainment with the Salesian Family! Come to be renewed in the Spirit that moved St. John Bosco and St. Mary Mazzarello to respond with hope, courage, and joy.

REGISTER NOW

OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Mexico – Excitement and many initiatives at the Tijuana Salesian Project



(ANS – Tijuana) – Over the past few weeks, the 'Proyecto Salesiano Tijuana' - the body that coordinates the social activities of the Salesian presence in the city - has experienced several significant moments, with the visit of illustrious personalities, the strengthening and renewal of the projects that have been launched, and the exciting expression of the creativity of the youngest and most vulnerable recipients of Salesian apostolic activities. These are as follows:

Visit of the Apostolic Nuncio to the Padre Chava Refectory

On Saturday 30 November, the Apostolic Nuncio in Mexico, Archbishop Joseph Spiteri, visited the facilities of the Salesian Father Chava Refectory in the city of Tijuana, where every day the Salesians provide 650 meals to migrants and the homeless.

Archbishop Joseph Spiteri had the opportunity to learn about all the services offered by this project, such as showers, medical assistance and other health programs.

He blessed and spoke with different families and above all with some of the beneficiaries of the refectory, including citizens and foreigners.

During his visit, the Nuncio stressed that the Pope urged the leaders of all countries to respect migrants, recalling that the countries of the so-called "first world" need to be

supported by migration for their development and that the dignity of every person must be respected.

Consolidation and renewal of the "Bassa California – Frontiera Solidale" multi-service centre

The Global Assistance Centre for Refugees, Displaced Persons and the Local Population continues to consolidate itself as a national reference point. This center, in which the Salesians also collaborate, brings together civil associations and various federal, state and municipal government agencies, together with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and its objective is to provide dignified, complete and rapid attention to people forced to leave their countries of origin or who migrate from within Mexico.

Among the services offered are:

- Start of the process of recognition of refugee status in Mexico (asylum).
- Issue of birth certificates (for Mexicans).
- Support for obtaining the Unique Population Registry Key (CURP), humanitarian visa in Mexico, access to social security, bank account and more...
- Medical and dental care
- Connection with schools and work
- Support in the search for hospitality

(Continued on page 7)

OF SPECIAL INTEREST

- Psychological services
- Legal advice
- Artistic, cultural and sports activities
- Specialised attention to gender violence

Currently, with the support of the UNHCR, the space is being restructured to provide first-rate assistance to refugees, internally displaced persons and the local community, with a proposal in line with the Salesian charism.

Visit of "Don Bosco Mondo" to the Salesian Tijuana Project

On November 28 and 29, the Salesian Tijuana Project had the honor of receiving a visit from Annette Linn, from the German Salesian Mission Office, "Don Bosco Mondo", to examine the Namuncurá Project. Dr Linn was accompanied by the Economist of the Province of Guadalajara (MEG), Fr Jorge Mejía, and Christian, the lay head of the Planning and Development Office of the Province.

The project aims at the structural improvement of reception centers, offers on-the-job training courses and psychological and work accompaniment for refugees, displaced persons, deportees and migrants.

Until December 2024, courses were offered in:

- Electricity, level 1 and 2
- Pest control
- Artistic jellies
- Palliative care
- Light construction, level 1 and 2
- Works with epoxy resin
- Courses for hairdressers
- Life projects

Some workshops offer certification through a document that validates skills nationwide and in the United States of America.

"A possible dream": musical initiation workshops for children and adolescents on the move

On Saturday, 23 November, under the motto "A possible dream", the children and adolescents of the Salesian Don Bosco reception center, the Salesian school for low-income children and the Multiservice Center (CMS), participated in a Meeting of community choirs organized by the Ministry of Culture of Baja California, where through music and singing they performed a variety of songs for the public.

In this meeting, which was attended by several teachers and musicians from the Ministry of Culture and the Institute of Music of Baja California, the orchestral score of the song "Un sueño posible" was shared, where lyrics and music were created by the children participating in the first edition of the Music Initiation Workshops started in collaboration between the Secretariat for Culture of Baja California, the Art Center of Tijuana (CEART) and the Salesian Project Tijuana.

These workshops began in April of this year in two of the six works that the Salesians have in Tijuana and where they deal with children and adolescents on the move.

"Every effort and alliance we are developing consolidates our commitment to creating opportunities so that our beneficiaries, despite the difficult conditions they have to go through to reach Tijuana, can feel safe, protected, integrated and listened to by this community that receives them with affection and love," concludes the Director of the Tijuana Salesian Project, Fr Agustín Novoa Leyva, SDB.



PROVINCE ANIMATION

Message from Mikey Vera – Provincial Secretary

Local Center Coordinators, please review this message and follow up to ensure all information is passed along and completed as needed. Thank you and God Bless. If you ever have any questions, please reach out to our provincial Alex del Carmen at delCarmen@tarleton.edu and CC: SUOCooperators@gmail.com.

MESSAGE FROM OUR WORLD SECRETARY

You are all aware that the World Congress of our Association will be held in 2026, coinciding with the celebration of its 150th anniversary. One of the goals we have set for ourselves in preparation for the Congress is to arrive at that event with up-to-date and reliable data on our presence in the world and to be able to answer the question: "How many of us are there and where are we?" For this purpose, after sharing the proposal with the World Council, I am contacting you directly to ask for your cooperation.

Todos ustedes saben que el Congreso Mundial de nuestra Asociación se celebrará en 2026, coincidiendo con la celebración de su 150o aniversario. Uno de los objetivos que nos hemos marcado en la preparación del Congreso es llegar a este evento con datos actualizados y fiables sobre nuestra presencia en el mundo y poder responder a la pregunta: "¿cuántos somos y dónde estamos?" Para ello, después de haber compartido la propuesta en el Consejo Mundial, me pongo en contacto directamente con Usted para solicitarle su necesaria colaboración.

SECRETARIES

We are in need of your updated Local Center Census (see message above from World Secretary) along with when next elections are in your Center and who the current Local Council is. Work with Treasurer to send over with Economic Solidarity if you have not done so already. We would also really love to know who your SDB or FMA Delegate is as well.

If you are unsure or have any questions, please reach out to Provincial Secretary Mikey Vera at Mykey333+ASC@gmail.com and CC: SUOCooperators@gmail.com

Save the date for our Provincial Congress, which will be taking place in San Antonio, TX, in the Fall of 2025. ALL LOCAL CENTER COUNCILS are needed to have a quorum to vote for our next Provincial Council. Stay tuned for more details. If anyone would like to join the Congress Committee, please reach out to the following Provincial Councilor Delegates: Bertha Lopez at B.AlanizBL@gmail.com, Federico Parada at FedeParada03@gmail.com, and Lourdes Guzman at LGuzmel3@gmail.com and CC SUOCooperators@gmail.com

We share the letter from World Coordinator Antonio Boccia, in which he presents the initiatives in the second year towards the 150th anniversary. This letter is also available on the Association's website at the following link:

ENG: <https://www.asscc-mondiale.org/webSite/antonio-boccia-ci-motiva-nel-secondo-anno-verso-il-150-anniversario/?lang=en>

In addition, you can view Antonio Boccia's video message on the same topic on the Association's YouTube page at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95CBzlcZ4wY>

We recommend the widest possible dissemination of this news.

Compartimos la carta del Coordinador Mundial, Antonio Boccia, en la que presenta las iniciativas del segundo año hacia el 150 aniversario. Esta carta también está disponible en la página web de la Asociación en el siguiente enlace: SPA: <https://www.asscc-mondiale.org/webSite/antonio-boccia-ci-motiva-nel-secondo-anno-verso-il-150-anniversario/?lang=es> Además, puede ver el mensaje en vídeo de Antonio Boccia sobre el mismo tema en la página YouTube de la Asociación, en el siguiente enlace: [https://](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95CBzlcZ4wY)

(Continued on page 9)

PROVINCE ANIMATION

youtu.be/fq1OkK_s6vc Recomendamos la mayor difusión posible de esta noticia.

Friendly reminder that each Local Center has a Shared DropBox folder where the Province archives all of your Meeting Minutes. Please reach out to request how to add minutes yourself from each meeting or email SUOcooperators or Mikey to archive for you.

TREASURERS

Friendly reminder to send your Economic Solidarity for the year 2024 if you have not done so already. Work with Secretary to send over along with Census if you have not done so already.

If you are unsure, please reach out to Provincial Administrator/Treasurer Irma Bijarro at mi1924@aol.com

FORMATORS

Whether you are appointed or elected this is for you so please forward to anyone who is responsible with ongoing and/or initial formation at your local Center.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Provincial Co-Formators Pam Meyer (Texas) at Pam.Meyer77@yahoo.com or Ana Uriarte (California) at Ana.Gabriella.Uriarte@gmail.com and SUOcooperators@gmail.com

There is a request from the Provincial and Regional in order to better serve all of us around Formation they ask us to fill out the following Formators Information Collection Please click link and I ask again to forward along to anyone responsible with Formation.

Our Provincial Communication

Co-Coordiators would love to have a representative from each Local Center. If you could, please ask those in your Center and delegate to someone, then share with me by replying here along with Phoebe Mok at PhoebeMok@gmail.com and Julia Tafoya at Julster13@gmail.com and CC SUOCooperators@gmail.com

Let us join together in prayer across the Province:

For the family of Pam Meyer, who lost her Father Duane Francis Lynch

For the family of Don Varella as his wife, who was also a Cooperator, passed away

With prayers and gratitude, as we are all responsible for the Association and on behalf of,

ASC-SUO PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

Mikey Vera – Provincial Secretary

"Give me souls, take away the rest." +Don Bosco



PROVINCE NEWS

Savio Spanish Center – Mass and New Banner

By Armando Gonzalez, Coordinator, St. Dominic Savio Spanish Center



After several years of work to create a banner representing the Spanish-speaking Salesian Cooperators at St. Dominic Savio, the goal was finally achieved. Since 2016, the group has put tremendous effort into creating a banner, supported by all members and fundraising efforts. This beautiful banner will now proudly represent the group at all formal gatherings and processions.

On November 10th, the banner was blessed by our Pastor, Fr. Mike G, during our first Salesian Cooperator Mass, where the Cooperators also renewed their promise as Cooperators. They also prepared the intentions for the Mass and were the altar servers for the celebration.

The talented people at Chagall Design in Carson, CA crafted the banner. The initial design was created by Giovanni Fernandez, who is currently in formation to become a Cooperator at St. Dominic Savio. He developed three different designs, which the group then voted on, ultimately choosing the one that best represents the Cooperators, featuring an image of our founder, St. John Bosco, along with the Cooperators' logo.



PROVINCE NEWS

KIDZ Feeding KIDZ Dreams Big this Thanksgiving

By Socorro M. Manzanilla, Salesian Cooperator, St. Joseph's Retreat Center

(Rosemead, California) – Five years ago at Thanksgiving, Kidz Feeding Kidz (KFK) was born from the passion and vision of two brothers, Nolan and Nicolas Adalin, students at Don Bosco Technical Institute in Rosemead. With unwavering dedication, a heart for others, and the support of their family, they created an initiative to give back to those less fortunate. Their charitable service this Thanksgiving was made possible with the support of the St. Joseph Retreat Center Salesian Cooperators and Sunday Mass communities, all of whom believe in the power of these young men's dream.

With the approval of Fr. Thien Nguyen, SDB, the director of the Salesian community in Rosemead, the KFK student leaders went to the October meeting of the Salesian Cooperators at St. Joseph Retreat Center. They went to draw support for their initiative, and to their surprise they received a challenge. As part of his provincial visitation, Fr. Mel Trinidad, SDB, was present at

the Cooperator meeting. He challenged the young men to double their impact by filling thirty baskets, not just fifteen, for needy families this year.

The inspired KFK leaders spread their wings and cast a wider net. What started as a small idea grew into something extraordinary. With tireless outreach to friends, family, and contacts, KFK surpassed its goal. On November 17, a stunning \$1,205 and eight large boxes of canned food were donated for Thanksgiving baskets, bringing joy to 33

needy families in East Los Angeles. According to the parents of the Adalin brothers, "God blessed us with sending generous people our way to grow KFK every year to serve even more people in our East LA community."

Nolan and Nicolas, your dedication and big dreams reflect the very spirit of St. John Bosco, reminding us all of the power of kindness, generosity, and community. You are true examples of what it means to give selflessly.



Thank you to everyone who contributed, and a heartfelt Happy Thanksgiving to all!

Source: [InTouch](#)



PROVINCE FORMATION

Online Formative Congress of SSCC-InterAmerica Region

"The two columns to be faithful"

By Br. Dominic Duc Nam Nguyen, SDB, World Delegate for Salesian Cooperators

God calls us to be Salesians in the world, to dedicate ourselves to Him, to live Salesian Charism and to serve the young. Our personal vocation should be taken seriously. We can't live our vocation just like an answer in the past, or a call once and for all, but every day, we have to renew our first "yes", each day we have to get closer to the fountain of our vocation that is Christ. If we don't nurture our spiritual life, we may fall to mechanism, our vocation will become barren. Our vocation must be nurtured by the Eucharist and guided by the loving care of our Blessed Mary.

To nurture our vocation by the Eucharist means to receive Christ into our life, letting Him transform our life. Without this nutrition, we may become dry branches, incapable to bear fruit (Jn 15:5). We are called personally by God and we are called to be a member in this family of Don Bosco. We are all brothers and sisters in Don Bosco. We are not only responsible for our own vocation but also for the others. Vocational accompaniment of others is a journey reciprocity. Helping others to grow in their vocation which means to change ourselves and grow together. We are called to live this dimension of accompaniment with a sincere and unconditional love, creating an atmosphere in which each vocation can bloom and mature in joy and faithfulness. Walking together in our vocational journey means sharing our responsibility, sharing our faith, listening God's voice and discerning the signs and challenges of the time.

In the dream of the two columns of Don Bosco, the image of the ocean and the boat is very familiar to us which represents the pilgrim Church. We also often see that in the bible especially in this passage of the Gospel of St. Mark: Jesus Calms the Storm (Mk 4:35-41)

35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." 36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. 37 A

furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" 1 39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. 40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" 41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Don Bosco had a dream similar with this passage namely "the dream of the two columns". I am sure all of us already knew this dream very well. The ship symbolizes of the Church which is hold safely with the column of the Eucharist and bears beneath it the inscription: "Salus credentium" (Salvation of believers) and the column of Blessed Virgin Mary with the inscription at the feet: "Auxilium Christianorum" (Help of Christians). How the Church is protected from all enemies and from all dangers.

[FULL FORMATION ARTICLE](#)



YOUTH MINISTRY

Salesian Youth Synod: Encountering the Worldwide Salesian Youth Movement

By Raul Salazar-Villagomez, Salesian Youth Movement

(Laredo, Texas) – The Salesian Youth Synod started on the 11th of August and ended on the 17th of August. The event took place in Valdocco and Colle, Italy, where about 290 young people from 93 different countries gathered to celebrate Don Bosco's mission and the Salesian Youth Movement worldwide. During the Synod, we were accompanied by 18 Salesian sisters, 41 Salesian priests and brothers, 15 musicians, five laypeople, and the Rector Major, Cardinal Angel Fernandez. In total, there were about 370 people to celebrate Don Bosco and his mission. Each day, we learned more about Don Bosco; the young people were able to tour essential locations of the Salesian Mission, like where the first oratory took place, the basilica in Valdocco, Colle Don Bosco, and Don Bosco's childhood home.

What did our days consist of at the Salesian Youth Synod?

An essential part of the Synod was the discussions held in small groups, where we would discuss what our dreams are for ourselves, within our communities, the Church, and the Salesian Youth Movement (SYM). The discussions, reflections, and large group sharing contributed to the creation of the Synod's document. Once the Instrumentum Laboris was finished, we would vote in rounds based on each language group's portion of the document (English, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese). All documents for each language were passed, meaning they will be included in the Instrumentum Laboris. At the end of each day, for our Goodnight, we would gather and have different entertainment and bonding exercises. For example, one of the days, we had a magic show performed by the La Magia de Don Bosco. Another, we would learn

chants or dances from different countries.

Salesian Youth Movement

Being invited to attend the Youth Synod was a dream. I cannot express how great it was to be able to meet the different people involved with the Salesians from all around the world. It showed me the connection young people have with Don Bosco's mission and that we continue to spread his mission in our respective countries. Being able to bond and create new friendships is something that I will cherish. It was a privilege to meet others from different cultures and share time with them. I learned much about myself and am taking it all home to apply to our Salesian programs and ministry.

I want to thank the USA Western Province Youth Ministry Office and Fr. Fabian Cardenas for inviting me to the Youth Synod and for all of their support. I am grateful to have been able to experience this trip.

Source: [InTouch](#)



YOUTH MINISTRY

Salesian Youth Synod: Hearing the Dreams of Young People

By Victoria Figueroa, Coordinator of the Youth Movement of the USA West

In August 2024, I was privileged to represent our province at the first Salesian Youth Synod hosted in Turin, Italy. I was invited, alongside Raul Salazar, a young adult from San Luis Rey in Laredo, Texas, by Fr. Fabian Cardenas. The entire experience was filled with excitement, spirit, and eagerness to learn more about the Salesian Charism. It was such an eye-opening and unifying experience for me. It brought clarity to who I am as a Salesian and brought me closer to the missionary spirit.

Salesian Family Around the World

When entering the gates of Valdocco, I was met with kindness, openness, and a familial spirit. At every turn, from the welcoming table to the administration team to the dining hall, you can see that our Salesian Family is unified and energetic. I was able to meet young Salesians from all over the world. Even though, geographically, we are spread so wide, there was one thing that unified us all. It was our dedication to the salesian mission and the

care for young people around the world. I was able to make friendships and connections that will last a lifetime, friendships that are rooted in Christ and in the Salesian mission.

I have the privilege of being bilingual. I was placed in the Spanish group, where I met some of the most amazing and dedicated individuals. I am of Latin blood and first generation born in the United States; thank you to all the representatives from Latin America who showed me love and offered me friendship. It was a blessing to feel connected to my Mexican ancestry and part of the culture. Furthermore, being in the Spanish group was eye-opening. I am excited to bring back everything I learned from my Salesian family from Latin America to our province. They truly understand and put into practice our Salesian spirituality. Their approach to the Salesian Youth Movement is inspiring and something I hope to be able to align with here in our province as the SYM Coordinator.



(Continued on page 15)

YOUTH MINISTRY

Instrumentum Laboris

The objective and goal of the Synod was to create a document that represents and tells the dreams of young people from around the world. The participants were broken into language groups, each language creating approximately 8-10 small groups (English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian). I hope that my sharing brought perspective to the realities of young people in the USA West. The document reflected the dreams of young people in regard to themselves, their families, society, and their dreams for the Salesian Youth Movement. There was one thing that was universal, no matter the country or the language, it was that young people seek to be protagonists and have opportunities to speak their desires. At the conclusion of the Synod and youth voting, the Instrumentum Laboris was completed and passed. Young Adults from all over the world were being taken seriously at a congregational level and were given the opportunity to share space with those in power. I feel proud to be part of the first-ever Synod, and I know that each young person who took part in the Synod will go back to their country inspired, as will I.

Vocational Call

Earlier this year, I took the step to begin formation to become a Salesian Cooperator. The Synod has strengthened my vocational call and brought certainty to the commitment I will make as an aspiring Cooperator. In Valdocco, when St John Bosco's hat, gloves, and coat came to my view, I was enveloped with such an intense feeling that St John Bosco was in the room with us. At that moment, looking and gauging the reactions of those in the room with me, I felt proud to be a Salesian, and my heart was filled with happiness. I want to spend my entire life aligned with our charism. Visiting Colle Don Bosco and meeting Mama Margherita in her own home warmed my heart; after all, she was the first Cooperator. Her nurturing aura was felt in that home, even after all these years. We

were able to be present for the official inauguration of the Field of Dreams, the place where the dream of nine years old took place. As I looked out upon the open grass and over the hills, I am sure this is my vocational call. For all these years, I have been a Cooperator and partner in the mission (through summer camps, oratory, and leadership conferences), but I am looking forward to officially making the Promise and dedicating my life to Don Bosco's mission.

My dream for the province, returning from the Salesian Youth Synod, is to grow the Salesian Youth Movement and to uplift young people to be protagonists in the province.

Source: [InTouch](#)



YOUTH MINISTRY

The Youth Ministry Sector Publishes the Final Document of the Salesian Youth Synod

(ANS – Rome) – In Valdocco and Colle Don Bosco, where so much Salesian history and fidelity has passed, the Salesian Youth Synod studied a proposal for the entire Salesian world. This was done by 375 people, mostly young people belonging to 94 nationalities, boys and girls of an average age of 23, from many nations, with different cultures and languages, but all with the same faith and the same intense commitment to the work started by Don Bosco.

Thanks to the work of the “minor groups,” or language groups, and the Assembly, the Final Document has been reached and is now made available to everyone. It looks at the reality of young people, the world, and the Church, identifying the perceptions, emotions, and expectations of young people. This text encourages all pastoral workers to undertake a serene and open reflection: “What must we change so that young people go from being spectators to protagonists in the Church and in society? What do young people think, feel, and want?”

“Perhaps we should take advantage of this synodal time to aim at a more mystagogical pastoral care which educates the interior and arouses the experience of God in every moment, which helps to discover one’s vocation and gives priority to pastoral accompaniment,” underlines Fr Miguel Angel García Morcuende, General Councillor for Salesian Youth Ministry.

The proposals of the Final Document deepen the experience of Salesian Youth Spirituality from an international dimension, transforming these pages into a great celebration of the journey of evangelization carried out throughout the Salesian world. They help to discover the hearts of young people and find those vibrations of the Spirit that help to invent new paths and sources of faith.

“There is nothing in youth cultures that does not resonate in our hearts,” Fr García Morcuende says.

At the end of these days of grace, the members of the Youth Ministry Sector can say that they were present at an appointment with history. “We were present at an unforgettable moment,” they explain. “At the Synod we were accompanied by the summer sun and the light of that other sun that rises from above and that we received every day in the Eucharist.”

For anyone who participated, it was great to see that the young people want to embark on the beautiful adventure of leading their companions and friends to Jesus, with



whom they share great ideals, struggles, and defeats in the search for the advent of the civilization of love, solidarity, and peace.

In the conversations to reach these conclusions, it was possible to see the diversity of cultures, youth, and the Church, but also the unity that the charism of Don Bosco gives, allowing us to identify in these ways of taking on life and faith. It was a source of great joy to see the participation, intent and understanding, the ability to work and discern and the sharing of many moments of reflection, culture, prayer and proposal.

Click [here](#) for the Salesian Youth Synod final document.

IN MEMORIAM

Catherine Varella

December 12, 1934 - August 28, 2024



Catherine Marchese Varella passed away peacefully on August 28, 2024, at her home in San Antonio, Texas, at the age of 89, surrounded by her family. Catherine was born on December 12, 1934, to Lizzie and Thomas Marchese in Garfield, New Jersey, and graduated from Garfield High in 1952. She graduated nursing school from Passaic Community College in 1955. From 1957 to 1959, she worked as a Registered Nurse for Catholic Relief Services in Saigon, Vietnam, where she met Donald David Varella, who was stationed at the US Embassy. They were later married in Saigon on November 14, 1959, celebrating 65 years of marriage.

God and family were Catherine's passions. She served others with empathy, compassion, and generosity.

Catherine is survived by her husband, Donald, and her children Andrew, Virginia (Raymond), John (Lynda), David (Jenny), Lisa (Robert), and Irene (Heath). She has 25 grandchildren and 35 great-grandchildren.

Catherine is a Salesian Cooperator from the St John Bosco Center in San Antonio, Texas.

*Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon her.*

May she rest in peace.

AMEN.

