



TUGBOATS

...an additional help to steer a willing heart and mind into the harbour of life or out into the sea of living, as did Don Bosco, with and for the thousands of young people of his times.



The 'Francis Effect' on Salesians!

POPE FRANCIS: TO TAKE OR LEAVE HIM?

Fr Koonan Thomas sdb (INK)

Every move in the early days of Pope Francis in office struck a chord of change, novelty, challenge, and punch. He and his words and deeds attracted people primarily because of their potency to alter lives. The popular perception was that he would level hills and fill valleys in the Church and outside. People took pride in reading and quoting Pope Francis.

However, as time passes by, the attention and eagerness that went viral appear to have been tamed, have become muted. Many surely do persist while a few have put him aside. Traditionalists, diffident or even suspicious, struggle to digest him. While for some it seems merely a matter of curiosity, for some others emulating him is too costly. Yet others apparently carry him as a decoration, like an electric illumination set that conceals more than reveals their own intentions. There are others who use him, occasionally bordering on misuse.

All these categories are more or less found also among the Salesians, though it is more difficult to determine the percentage. True to the third Salesian devotion, there may be no one who rejects the Pope outright. But some are still waiting and watching, weighing options as it were - whether to

"Ask yourselves this question: How often is Jesus inside and knocking at the door to be let out, to come out? And we do not let him out because of our own need for security, because so often we are locked into ephemeral structures that serve solely to make us slaves and not free children of God." (Pope Francis, Pentecost vigil, May 18, 2013).



take the Pope seriously or not, to plunge in or restrain. The enthusiasm lived by the General Chapter particularly in the aftermath of *Evangelii Gaudium* was overwhelming. But apparently that too has been 'contained'.

These diverse reactions to a person, even to an ideology, are nothing exceptional. There are always those who take or leave, accept or reject. It was done with Jesus Himself, and the story with Pope Francis can be hardly different. The crux of the matter is the personal stand you and I take towards the Pope. As the Chinese proverb says, "You cannot prevent birds from flying over your head, but you can prevent them from building nests in your hair."

IF POPE FRANCIS WERE TO BE MY SUPERIOR...

Frinsha Francis (An aspirant with the FMAs)

At first when asked to think about this statement, very many of us were elated. However, after a while of simple reflection I realized that if Pope Francis were to be my superior I would simply continue being what I am. Frankly, I feel it is my life and I need to live it with my convictions; no matter who or how my superior lives. I do respect the Pope Francis as the head of Church or in this case, as my superior. However, my attitudes and actions

would primarily be guided by what I believe myself to be, rather than what I wish my superior to think of me. My primary commitment is to Jesus Christ and it is to Him that I am accountable to.

While I agree that role models help, even such as Pope Francis himself, I also need to accept the fact that I am not here to imitate all the persons whom I come across in my life. The One person truly worth imitating is Jesus. Thinking critically,

as my superior, Pope Francis is only a representative of God in my community (as he in fact is the highest authority on earth in the tradition of the apostles). But by my baptism, I too am called to be another Christ. So as a man of age and experience, I certainly would stand to benefit from his presence in my community, but as by way of convictions and attitudes, I would need to build my own and not be satisfied applauding someone else's.

POPE FRANCIS, THE ODD MAN... BUT IS HE?

Br Vincent Castilino sdb (INH)



Much has been spoken, written and discussed about Pope Francis since the time he was elected Pope. That he was no different before the election is a fact, not everyone seems to take notice of. Each one sees something different in him. That he has not made much of Papacy itself, is something most find odd: modest residence at Santa Marta, sharing meals in

the common place, spontaneous 'radical' statements about homosexuals, open criticism of the Italian mafia, changes in the Vatican financial administration, the dialogical discussion with the team of cardinals...

Someone ought to remind him that he is the Pope... the Pope! Left to himself, some ponder aloud, he would have by now changed the face

of Vatican – if not for the institutional set up that perhaps runs the Vatican.

We have had Popes since ages. Why then does he stand out, so loud and tall? Is it merely the media hype? Or is it because he is really doing something extraordinary? On the contrary, perhaps he is being ordinary. He is one of those rare species who live exactly how one is supposed to live! He is merely being and doing what he is supposed to be: a man of God! The rest of us, 'regular', 'normal' people have all mastered the art of camouflage or make-over. Over the centuries, we have conveniently altered the very meaning of what it means to be a Priest, a clergyman, a Christian, a Pope. Pope Francis, on the other hand, seems to be one of the few who just forgot to get trained or merely skipped this common 'baptism'! He is merely living the spirit of Christ – no frills, no baggage, no excuses, no regrets... literally and metaphorically.



THE 'FRANCIS EFFECT' ON SALESIANS

Fr Tony D'Souza sdb (INB)

Ever since Jorge Mario Bergoglio stepped into the Vatican balcony and was presented *Urbi et Orbi* as Pope Francis, the spotlight has been focussed on the *servus servorum Dei*. Like Jesus the *Verbum Caro factum est*, the utterances of Pope Francis, literally exemplified in his personal life, have been making an impressive impact. Call it, the 'Francis effect'.

Let's recall some of the Pope's prophetic words and gestures: the move from the aristocratic papal apartments to dwell as a commoner, 'with the poor and for the poor'; his constant refrain urging his flock to move to the periphery of society and reach out to the poor; his brave and indefatigable witness to the compassion of Jesus for the sick, the oppressed, the persecuted and the ostracised sinners; and best of all, his deep Faith convictions about God and courageous consistency as a witness to Jesus Christ. Far from being today a 'rudderless' barque, the Church inspired by the 'Francis effect' is striving to be what Jesus wanted it to be: a community that is the Light of the world, the Salt of the earth and the Yeast that builds the Kingdom of God.

As for the 'Francis effect' on our Salesian Society, may we say, it has its roots in the 'Don Bosco effect' on the young Salesian Past pupil, as early as 1949! Without discounting in the least, the Jesuit links and leanings of Pope Francis, and his clear emulation of the '*Poverello of Assisi*', doesn't his choice vocabulary and ministry focussed on the 'periphery' to the 'marginalised and poor', reflect Don Bosco's fundamental option and missionary concern for poor people?

The bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, also invites us to live more loyally our founder's devotion to the Holy Father and the Church, and in concrete, a passionate love for Jesus, the Son of God; a compassionate outreach towards the young, the weak and marginalised; and, a zealous missionary enthusiasm for the coming of the Kingdom of peace, love and justice among all nations and peoples.

May the 'Francis effect' on us Salesians urge us to be 'mystics, prophets and servants' in the service of the mission of Jesus Christ.

Know Don Bosco

1. Who ordained Don Bosco a priest?
2. What did Leo XIII say about his work?
3. Name the Pope who guided the church at the time of Don Bosco's birth?
4. What did Leo XIII tell the Oratory music master about Don Bosco?
5. When was Mary Mazarello canonized? By whom?

(Names of those who send the right answers will be published in the next issue. Please send your answers to manunsdb@yahoo.com)

Answers for the October 2014 Issue

1. Who was Bosco's childhood friend? *Aloysius Comollo*
2. What magazine did Don Bosco bring out against the bad press? *The Friend of Youth*
3. Who was the leader of the first regular missionary band to India? *Mons. Mathias*
4. Where was the first academic and technical school started by Don Bosco? *Valdocco*
5. How many Salesians attended the first General Chapter? *17 Salesians. (1 priest, 15 clerics and 1 aspirant)*

POPE FRANCIS AS MY PROVINCIAL...

Cl. Vikesh Joseph sdb (INM)

Pope Francis has captivated the world and we can feel the Holy Spirit in the person of our Holy Father sweeping the whole world. Rather than look upon him from a distance as the 'Pope', someone physically far away and not so 'in touch' with me here and now, I let my imagination wild and see what if Pope Francis were to be my Provincial...

Here's how, I guess, he would go about. First of all, as provincial, he would go for the various canonical visitations and all other meetings only by public transport. That he would demand the same of his confreres, goes without saying. Secondly, he would tell his confreres to leave their air-conditioned boleros and scorpions and well furnished offices and be on the dusty roads with the ordinary folk, working with them. Thirdly, he would tell his confreres to reduce their expenses and increase the salary for the cooks, drivers and gardeners working in our institutions.

In my opinion, he would windup the office of the so-called, 'Vocation Promoter'. It is because true vocations do not need advertisements and attractive offers. Vocations are not something we desperately hunt for, rather something we nurture by our authentic witness of life, when a young person, moved by the Spirit seeks guidance. His only benchmark for true vocations would be a strong love for Christ and readiness to suffer for Him. He would undoubtedly stress more on the humanness of Christ, for what matters primarily is to become a good human being. The easiest means to gauge the depth of our religion, holiness and spirituality would be to see how deeply human these help us become.

He would plainly tell the confreres not to be a scandal if they cannot at the most be a model. However he would never tolerate power games, groupism, linguistic or caste based divisions and comfortable mediocrity. So he would not hesitate to someone not living upto one's religious calling, to pack up and at least live a good married life, for a good vocation outside is better than a bad vocation inside.



Questions to Ponder

- * **What is it that makes Pope Francis different from the rest of us?**
- * **Has he become or made into a role model worth only admiring but too difficult imitating?**
- * **Besides the intense *Evangelii Gaudium* centered discussions during the GC 27, how has the person or doctrine of the Holy Father influenced the Salesians of the 21st century?**
- * **What challenges do you envisage the Salesian congregation to undertake, taking inspiration from Pope Francis?**
- * **Will my life be the same if Pope Francis were to be my Provincial/Rector?**



OPTIMISM AND TRUST

Cl. Jerin Palatty sdb (INK)

Pope Francis was elected at a time when the accusations against the Church were at its epitome: financial mismanagement, Vatileaks, accusations of pedophilia, politics and power games among the clergy... However, Pope Francis took a bold stand. "Let us never yield to pessimism, to that bitterness that the devil offers us every day. Let us not yield to pessimism and discouragement..." is what he said to the cardinals on March 15, 2013 soon after his election as the Pope.

Looking within our own congregation one can very well re-word the parable of the lost sheep: Instead of the one lost sheep, there is only one inside, while the ninety nine are outside! In such a context, reminding ourselves of the optimism of Pope Francis, we need to reiterate article 17 of our Constitutions, 'Optimism and Joy': 'A Salesian does not give way to discouragements in face of difficulties because he has complete trust in the Father... He is able to make his own what is good in the world and does not bewail his own times; he accepts all that is good especially if it appeals to the young.'

It is worth mentioning what Pope said about some Salesians working in his diocese in an *Intervista per 30 Giorni* when he was still the Local Ordinary of Buenos Aires. Referring to the enthusiasm of the Salesians who were working amidst the threats and persecution in the Villas in Buenos Aires, he said, "It is precisely this Don Bosco's style that moves me."

We can pity the galloping secularization and de-Christianized societies and internal dissent in the Church, but we ought to remember that the very origin of our congregation took place during one of the most troublesome times of the Church. This is what we learn from the life of our father and founder Don Bosco. Whatever be the situation we encounter let us have the faith that Don Bosco too had: "God will provide."

"YOUR FRANK OPINIONS ..."

Congrats for the tugboats! It is good. Continue. Congrats to all the writers. *Fr Maria Arokiam sdb*

Formation is an accompaniment-walk. The formator is to be walking the path with Jesus present in the life of the formee. Just as He walked the muddy, sandy shore of Palestine, so too the formator must walk with the candidate, walking through the slushy, vague, uncertain and perplex pathways and bi-lanes, listening to the plan of God for the individual concerned. It is not about teaching, but learning together. At this point formation would become transforming for the formator first and then for the formee. *Fr Chakkanattu Raju sdb*

Congratulations! The 'Tugboats' has been a great initiative for the bicentenary year. I read all the three issues. All the articles have been very thought provoking. I hope and wish that 'Tugboats' will continue even after the bicentenary year. *Fr Pius John sdb*

There were many new approaches to Formation for Transformation expressed in the several articles of TUGBOATS Issue No. 3. Thanks for the deep insights. I understand Formation as a transactional relationship between Formators and Formees, a mutual responsibility to communicate spiritual, human, intellectual, social and moral values and principles. Transformation instead, inspired by God's Grace, is purely the end result of a personal inner process of absorbing and blending of these same values in each formee, especially during the formative years. This "trans-Formation" defines a holistic, integrated person and leads to an Ongoing Formation process of growth all through life. *Fr Tony D'Souza sdb*

Thank you for the effort and hard work put in to bring out a new, creative, innovative issue. It is very good. The title 'Tugboats' itself is interesting. Even those not really into reading reflective stuff feels drawn in to read what follows. Good. I am enriched. Thank you so much. *Sr Mini fma*