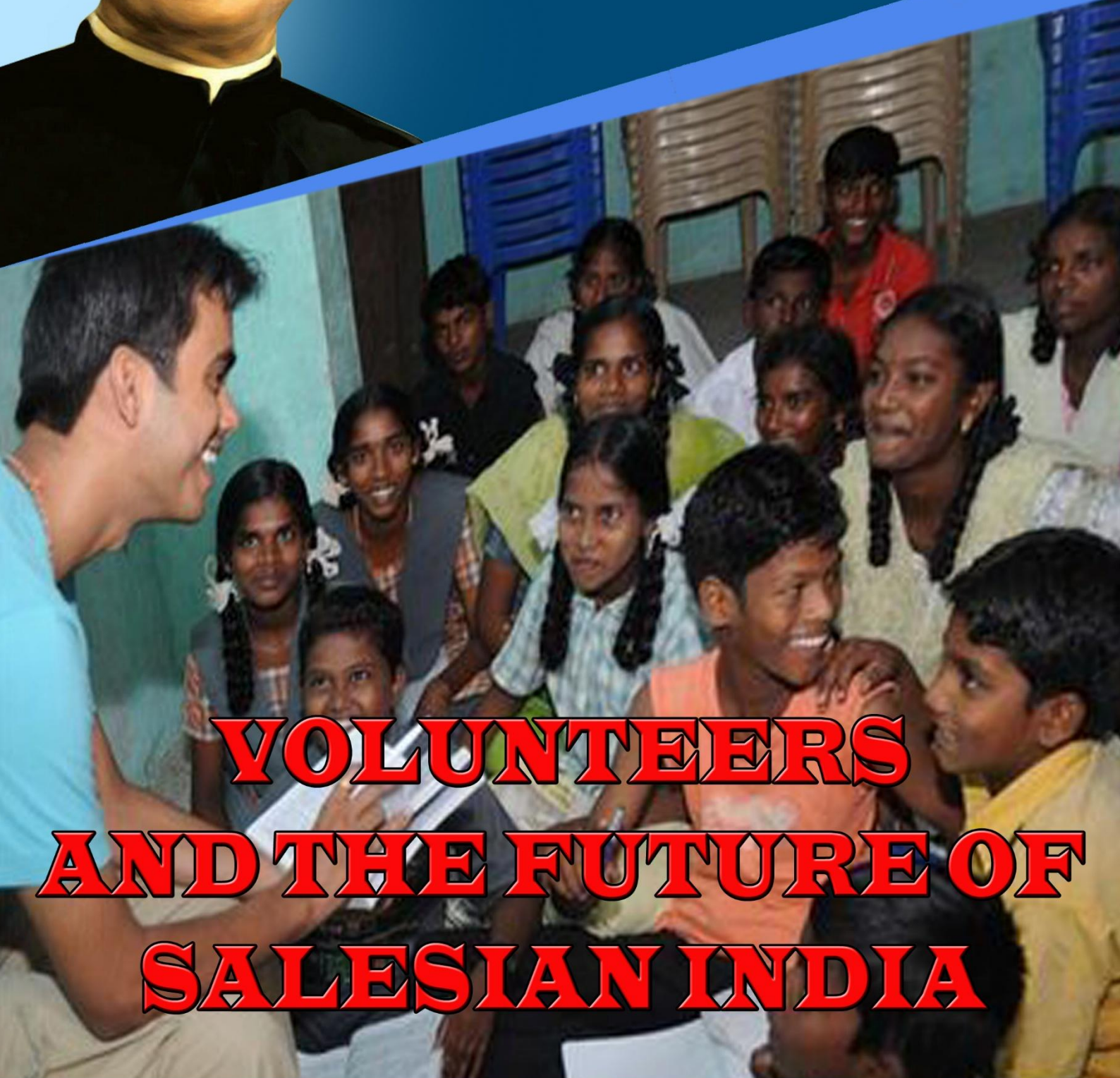


TUGBOATS

...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.



VOLUNTEERS AND THE FUTURE OF SALESIAN INDIA



ABANDONED MINISTRIES

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The following is the only article we received to the topic 'Abandoned Ministries'. However we would like to state that there have been several initiatives which 'died' much after individual, provinces and the congregation, at times, owned up the initiatives. For reasons best unknown, they go down in history unrecorded-unacknowledged, except in the memory of those involved.

PROJECT EUROPE

Anchukandam Thomas

Already before the 26th General Chapter in 2008, Rev. Fr Pascual Chavez Villeneuve, the then Rector Major, had made known his intentions to launch Project Europe with the scope of reawakening the missionary dynamism of the Congregation in the Old Continent so affected by the phenomenon of post-modernism. This must also have been inspired by the idea of "New Evangelization" insisted on by the Church. The Chapter itself saw this as a new initiative along the lines of the hugely successful Project Africa launched in the early 1980's. A radical change of mentality intended to bring about a more significant apostolate among the young, re-dimensioning of the works with support of congregational solidarity from around the world and the infusion of younger blood from around the world into the older corpus of the European Salesian personnel were some of its intended scopes.

There was, at least in some minds, as expressed also at the 2008 Chapter, the oversimplified notion of a "payback time" to Europe by the Salesians from around the world who had benefitted from the missionary efforts of European missionaries in the previous decades.

Today, more than 10 years removed from the launching of the project, it has proved, at best, no

more than a "qualified success"! A brief note about "infusing new blood"... The simplistic assumption was that just providing young confreres – willing, eager or prevailed upon by superiors – to work in Europe in itself would better the situation. The ground realities, however, soon enough helped to lay this assumption to rest.

On the one hand, the young confreres did not always get the reception that they expected viz., that accorded to generous young people coming over as missionaries - received with affection and helped to insert themselves into the new situation. On the other hand, the new arrivals, some of them well qualified in their own home provinces, were unprepared to face the ground realities of a world that has already had an experience of Christ and the Church and in the post-modern situation had turned openly hostile. In the given cultural milieu, the young missionaries were themselves challenged to be faithful to the faith they had come to proclaim! The difference between missionaries from Europe evangelizing the rest of the world and missionaries from the rest of the world coming to evangelize Europe could not have been starker. It is hoped that the past experience and reflection on the same by all involved will help the project realize its intended scope.



LAY VOLUNTEERS – OPENING NEW VISTAS

Cl. Jerin Palatty SDB (INK)

The underlying principle of all the Salesian works is beautifully laid out in our constitutions, namely, “to be in the Church signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are poor.” (C 2) The inner calling of the members of the Salesian society to be faithful to this vision of Don Bosco was reiterated later in GC 24 thus, “Like Don Bosco, with you (young people) we want to live, with you we want to stay, with you we want to work for the salvation of the young.” But our mission is not an easy task. We live in an ever-changing world. Today we witness an increased social, civil and political sensitivity. This uneasiness tends to become deeper because of the shortcomings of the religious institutions and their difficulties in communication in the languages of the young, and in coping with their superficiality and the absence of virtue.

This present world scenario demands a new kind of collaboration among all the good willed people for the work of evangelization. This is summarized in the tag line, “together towards a new apostolic commitment.” Recognizing the importance of the laity, the Catholic Church through the exhortation *Christifideles Laici* encouraged more lay participation in the Church. With the dwindling of vocations coupled with the expansion of Salesian presences, we too are forced to look out for help and assistance from the laity. But a closer observation would reveal that volunteers and lay collaborators were there at the very beginning of our congregation. We can think of Mamma Margaret, the mother of Bishop Gastaldi and many young people who shared the spirit of Don Bosco and gave their energies and time willingly for the liberation of young people. Don Bosco esteemed the presence of such volunteers. He says, “If I had with me a group of youngsters who think as I do, we could conquer the world.”

The Salesian congregation extended its appreciation for the lay volunteers in its 24th General Chapter. The theme for the 24th General Chapter of the Salesian Society was ‘Salesians and Lay People: Communion and Sharing in the Spirit and Mission of Don Bosco.’ GC 24 says, “We encourage you (young people) to be missionaries among the young.”

What is the contribution that the volunteers make? Let me turn your attention to what the Chapter says about the unique task that can be fulfilled by the volunteers. The chapter says to the volunteers, “By indicating to us the problems of society which you live at first hand, you can help us to update our educative and pastoral work. This too is a gift for us at a time when we are reflecting on the secular dimensions of the Church and of the congregation.” An emphasis on excessive clericalism can be a hindrance to the mission of the Church. An approach to the new evangelization requires the collaboration of lay people too. Here we can think of the famous dream of Don Bosco wherein his own boys turned out to be the shepherds of the young. Young volunteers are a source of effective evangelization for the youngsters who see in these volunteers a person like them yet full of good will to make difference in human lives. It is true that through their immersion in the secular world, the volunteers can pass on to us the sensitivities and the pulse of the world derived from their practical experience. The young animators in fact, show themselves sensitive and solid with the world of poverty and youth emargination: the needy in general, the street children, youngsters at risk and drug addicts. Youthful creativity and verve in this field stimulate us to think of innovative ways of fulfilling our mission.

Inviting volunteers to collaborate with our work is a means to approach the third millennium with a new look, involving in its spirit and mission the greatest possible number of men and women who, by educating and evangelizing want to work with it for the establishment of the kingdom of God.

LAY VOLUNTEERS AND OUR MISSION IN INDIA

Sr Josmy Jose FMA (INK)

To gift your time in favor of the one who is in need and together with him/her build a culture of solidarity and of hope is voluntary service. This definition was given by one of the volunteers of VIDES. Her experiences as a volunteer in the different parts of the world helped her to return to her faith in Jesus.

The lay volunteer in our mission is becoming an indispensable one. We need to make ourselves more open to the lay volunteer vocations. Listening to some of their experiences as volunteers, some of them have come back to faith and Catholic Church. Some others on their return are ready to give up little comforts and continue to help the particular students and families.

Local lay volunteers are very much helpful in working among the young people of today. It is a fact that we need to give them proper training in volunteering. Particular to our context, lay volunteers can be also of other religions. It was

Particular to our context, lay volunteers can be also of other religions.

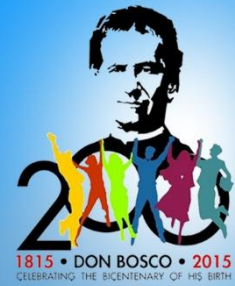
edifying that in one our communities, Muslim educated young girls volunteered themselves to help the poor children of the locality. Young people who are filled with energy and creativity will give a special colour to our mission especially in India.

Voluntary service also can be considered as a proposal for a new way of evangelization. The last General Chapter calls it "Laboratory of faith" and growth in the vocational dimension for the young. There is an exchange of values that takes place in voluntary service. The Gospel values are transmitted directly and indirectly from one group to another, not only through words but more through the life.



Answers for the April 2015 Issue

1. Who was the first protector of the Salesian Society?
Pope Pius IX.
2. When was the institute of Mary Help of Christians consecrated?
9 June 1868
3. Who was the minister who encouraged Don Bosco to form a society?
Minister Urban Ratazzi
4. Which was Don Bosco's bestseller?
'The Companion of Youth'
5. What were the last words of Don Bosco?
"Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give my soul into your hands."



YOUNG LAY VOLUNTEERS – WORKS AND IMPACT

Cl. Mylin Noronha SDB (INB)

Salesian India has welcomed many young lay volunteers from abroad in the past few years. Most of them stay for almost a year and engage in training our students in sports, music and other such extracurricular activities. There are others who put their professional skills to excellent use by conducting health camps, training in vocational skills and other similar works of a socio-economic nature.

However, not many of our Indian youth seem to volunteer similarly, although they are both impressed and enthused by our work with the poor and abandoned. Our education system and the need to amass academic qualifications for good careers, probably leave our youth with little or no time to lend us a helping hand in our endeavours. However, this cannot be considered to be insensitivity on their part. The present generation seems to be aware of its responsibilities towards society. Consequently, today we do have many young volunteers who spend their time in the service of the poor and young. Many of these spend their vacations in our mission stations – in remote parts of the country – where they help out in the summer camps by teaching the kids art, craft, sports, music, dance, etc. Often they are also engaged in helping the students develop their soft skills to acquire good future prospects.

While many find spare time during their vacations, some also make time during the rest of the year by spending time in our institutions that engage in 'Youth at Risk' work. Some of our boardings and schools receive immense help from young volunteers during their preparation

for stage performances. Occasionally our schools and institutes of higher learning ensure that students also engage in social work. This is usually done by asking them to set up base in one of our mission houses and then visit and survey the neighbouring villages.

All this help from our young volunteers adds variety, novelty and often professionalism to our works. Those entrusted to our care often enjoy the presence of these young volunteers and benefit immensely from them. More importantly, the young volunteers themselves not only enjoy themselves but also learn a lot. For most of them (especially those from urban areas) our works and the life style of the people in the rural areas is an

eye-opener. Often, many of them pledge to dedicate some time in social work after seeing the plight of many exploited sections of society. Their close association with the salesian community gives them a better understanding of our life and mission and can sometimes inspire them to become salesians or join one of the section of the salesian family.

The church's universal call for lay collaboration, dwindling religious vacations and a rising need for professionalism makes the presence of lay volunteers in the future of our mission very significant. As salesians we need to invite, encourage and support lay volunteers to realize and express their sense of responsibility towards society. This would entail orienting and preparing them before they actively engage themselves in our mission. Don Bosco envisioned a group of diverse persons carrying out his mission to uplift the poor and abandoned. The participation of young volunteers in our mission will go a long way in forming this dream of his into a fact!