Walk with Them...

one step at a time

PAGE 6
Dear Family and Friends,

We want Connections to be a channel through which our Salesian Family feels assured of our daily and fond remembrance of your intentions in prayer and in our love and affection. We pray that 2018 be a year of unlimited blessings for you and your loved ones. Don’t hesitate to write to us about the intentions you want us to pray for, and of course, we love it when pictures accompany your greetings and petitions!

This year, we want to make our dear, St. Mary Mazzarello more known and loved. We will be happy to send you her biography if you would like to know more about her life-story. As in everything that is GREAT, her greatness pours forth from her simplicity and humility. Her life and lessons are so simple that children as young as three years of age can learn the formula of true happiness from her simple words and gestures. One phrase she often used with the Sisters and children was, “Do the right thing, in the right place at the right time for love of God and one another!” This is more than a simple phrase, it is a life-plan. How much clarity this plan can bring to every moment of one’s life!

As our Mother General, Mother Yvonne so aptly stated in October, 2017 to the Provincials of the Americas, “Today our culture is suffering from a vocational crisis . . . delayed life choices . . . instability in the choices that are made . . . or even worse, no choices at all. More than ever, we need an antidote to a fading culture of commitment. These days, too many people are too happy when they are not called, because if no one calls, I don’t have to respond. I don’t have to be responsible to anyone. I am free to manage life as I want. Sooner or later this pseudo freedom is recognized for the illusion that it is. If no one calls me, no one is thinking of me, no one loves me, and I am not important to anyone. I feel alone and depressed, swimming in an ocean of my egocentric self-fulfillment and ultimately, self-destruction.”

Our dear St. Mary Mazzarello’s educative response is an effective pedagogy and spirituality that can turn this crisis around. You see this simple plan lived out in all of our ministries today. Her plan of holiness helps us to cultivate a sensitivity and environment of “good choices”. St. Mary Mazzarello found the way to help young and old alike, to recognize God’s calls and to respond joyfully with a wholehearted YES!

St. Mary Mazzarello’s profound wisdom is one way of following God’s plan for happiness. Her plan helps us to search for God’s calls and be filled with the strength of fidelity that comes from loving and following this plan with JOY, especially in the face of challenges.

My wish for you is to become familiar with St. Mary Mazzarello’s spirituality and to enjoy walking her journey of holiness. I close this message with the greeting St. Mary Mazzarello would give to the Sisters and children of Mornese, a greeting we still use today that reminds us that we are never alone on the journey to heaven. Jesus and Mary are lovingly present to guide us along the path to ETERNAL HAPPINESS. If we are not walking toward Jesus with Mary, Jesus and Mary and walking towards us in pursuit!

Viva Gesù! Viva Maria!

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Though we are aware of the many negative influences which provoke a crisis of meaning for young people today, we are also witnesses of a youth culture that is searching for truth, community, authenticity and beauty in life. Over the past two years, the Salesian Sisters community in Colorado Springs has placed a special emphasis on accompanying women and men in their 20’s and 30’s, married and single, as they respond to the universal call to holiness.

With the increased levels of indifference, disconnection and disengagement among those in their 20’s and 30’s, what should be the response for ministry for and with young adults?

At 6,035 feet, the city of Colorado Springs sits over one mile above sea level and is situated near the base of one of the most famous American mountains, Pikes Peak. Attracted by the beauty of nature, many young adults move to this region for work related purposes. With few or no family members in the surrounding area, our ministry has become a home for them. It is a place where they cultivate genuine relationships, have a sense of belonging, and discover that they are loved by someone bigger, God. From mountain top masses to potluck dinners, sports in the park to bible studies at coffee shops, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament to serving in soup kitchens; we strive to meet the young people where they are and accompany them on the path of being good Christians and honest citizens in a holistic way.
This past summer our Provincial House was buzzing with activity. On June 17th eight of our elder Sisters unable to leave the house had a special celebration of their unceasing love for God.

At the June celebration, the eight elder Sisters were: Sr. Ida Chagin – 75 years, Sr. Julia Anguiano, Sr. Maria Becerril, Sr. Ofelia Lozano, and Sr. Olga Munoz – all 70 years, and Sr. Sara Garcia, Sr. Guadalupe Gomez, and Sr. Stella Tafoya – 65 years. There was a very large group of past pupils and friends who came from Laredo, since many of these Sisters are from Laredo and/or served there at some point in their life. Fr. Raymond Mwangala, OMI was the main celebrant for Mass. He urged our Sisters to look back in their lives with gratitude, to live in the here and now, and to look to the future with hope. Fr. Raymond also thanked them on behalf of all those whose lives had been touched by them. A catered dinner followed. We managed to “squeeze in” some 150 guests in our two dining rooms. No one seemed to mind the tightness; all were just so happy to see our Sisters and join with their
own deep-seated thanks for them.

The July celebration at St. Paul's Catholic Community Center, six other Sisters commemorated their fidelity: Sr. Assunta Sanchez – 65 years, Sr. Kathleen Gibson – 60 years, Sr. Barbara Campbell, Sr. Jean Erickson, and Sr. Mary M. Link – all 50 years, and Sr. Sandra Neaves – 40 years. The main celebrant was Fr. Joseph Corpora, CSC, a past pupil of our elementary school, St. Anthony, in Easton, Pennsylvania. In his homily, Fr. Joseph said that a jubilee is a time to celebrate God’s fidelity, inviting people to pray in gratitude with us to God for his constant love. His love impels us to go to others, especially the young, and share our joy in Christ. Prior to the final blessing, Sr. Mary Link expressed the thanks of the jubilarians to all those who made this celebration possible. Following the Eucharistic celebration, everyone was invited to the dining area to continue the festive atmosphere with dinner and camaraderie. We enjoyed visiting with our many friends and other members of our Salesian Family.

Give Back to those who have GIVEN
donate to the Retired Sisters’ Needs Fund
Over the years, I can remember the times I noticed a tearful child, off to the side, while a playground of happy youngsters romp, laugh and tease; a silent, sullen student, struggling with a lesson; a shouting, angry teen, lashing out to anyone who would listen; an overly pensive young adult at work, troubled over last night’s date. I remember each of these incidents as though it were yesterday; sitting next to them and taking the time to listen and even hold them in a reassuring hug. I came to learn that the tearful child had just experienced seeing his dad arrested and taken to jail, and worried sick if he was ever going to see him again; the silent sullen student, struggling to pay attention after a night of not getting any sleep because of the fight his mother and father had over not having enough money to pay the rent and buy groceries; the shouting, angry teen heart-broken and afraid upon learning that her boyfriend broke up with her and finding out she is pregnant; the young secretary, thinking she had found the love of her life and wondering if she should continue the relationship after the way he treated her the previous day. All of these instances were moments in the life of a youth that would make or break them if caring adults weren’t willing to step in and walk with them, sometimes without even saying a word.

Accompaniment, (walking with the young) is the very theme that our Rector Major has given us to deepen throughout this year with his Strenna: “Sir, give me this water!” Let us CULTIVATE the art of LISTENING and of ACCOMPANIMENT. We are invited to reflect on the Gospel incident when Jesus asks the Samaritan woman for some water and to ponder the depth of meaning this brings to our understanding and practice of walking with our youth. I have invited Sr. Mary Greenan to write a piece in our “Connections” to talk to us about St. John Bosco’s style of accompaniment and what it means for us today. Thank you Sr. Mary, for giving us a look at St. John Bosco’s way.

- Sr. Rosann Ruiz, FMA

We, as members of the Salesian Family, are called each day to be for our young people and each other the loving and life-giving presence of “Jesus-with-us” because of the “Jesus-in-us”. It is a wonderfully awesome calling, one in which Jesus becomes both model and mediator in embracing God being God in the hearts of all of us.

At times in the ‘busy-ness’ of each day we can tend to fixate on the present problem, the issue raising its ugly head, the difficulty blocking the clear light of day. It becomes so difficult to see the bigger picture, to savor the incredible work we are
engaged in. Such times are usually a clear indicator for us to stop and take a deep breath. Such moments may challenge us to take to the open road in a search for clarity of thought and depth of meaning at the heart of what is happening around us. Nature has such sublime powers of healing and helping the human heart to ‘oxygenize’ its spiritual life-blood and nurture the soul back to life. My beloved space and place in nature is always the water. The running stream is good, the raging river better, and the open and limitless horizon of the ocean is by far best of all for me. Somehow at the shore I encounter a God who always challenges me to ‘seek beyond’ especially when I am struggling to ‘see beyond’.

At this moment in time I invite us all to stand at that shore in an attitude of seeking the God of possibilities who walks with us on the journey of each day. For us who love the young in the spirit of Don Bosco and Mary Mazzarello, what is God calling forth from us? We belong to a family dedicated to the education of the young, the young who are the future right here and right now. What do we see at this present moment in time?

Truly, we stand on the shore of a world ravaged by natural disasters, betrayed by self-seeking and introverted politics and policy making. We are constantly reminded of our vulnerability in the face of suicide bombs and the awful carnage left in their wake. We find little to no solace in the cry of fake news, and manipulated figures which seek to give value to even more self-righteousness if not self-seeking. Accusations are the order of the day whether they are tweeted or chanted angrily in bipartisan crowds. We have become unhinged from each other, at a moment in history when global interconnectivity could and indeed should bring us together. Accusations do not help the present situation. They only fracture it even more. We can be forgiven for falling into the hole of despondency, and seeing this all perhaps as one tsunami-like global upheaval in the making.

Little wonder we are seeking new ways to reconnect with the source of goodness beneath humanity’s heart of darkness. We, as members of the Salesian Family are being called to believe once more in the capacity of the younger generations to find their voice and walk in and into the light of God’s love and goodness. We look to our young people to become what Pope Francis challenges them to be: “missionary disciples”. We do this primarily by ‘being there’ for them, by being present to them and with them and among them.

The Pope’s call for a Synod in October of 2018 with the theme of “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment” is a call that warms the hearts of all of us. Don Bosco’s belief that education transforms society for the better has us continuing our journey alongside the young. We walk with them in the playground, in the classroom, wherever and however they are and in doing so transformation slowly happens. Ours is a call to us to meet the young where they are, and then continue to walk with them; to hope in them and to believe them capable of becoming the good disciples of a loving Christ, disciples who are true citizens called to build a world of compassion and justice, of peace and love, of unity in diversity. Called, as we all are, to assist in the transformation of our world.

The Salesian Family message for 2018, the Strenna, underlines for us our own vocation. Taking the gospel episode of the meeting between Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (John, Chapter 4) as our inspiration and model, we are asked to “cultivate the art of listening and of accompaniment”. As the coming year unfolds we are asked to nurture our capacity to meet the young where they are and walk with them into the fullness of life in Christ, ONE STEP AT A TIME . . .

Salesian Family CONNECTIONS  www.salesiansisterswest.org 7
Meet Sister Antonieta Böhm, a Salesian Sister. As a young person, she was attending a youth event and happened to see two Salesian Sisters who were happily laughing. She was attracted to that joy and the following week she found herself on the playground with about 600 young people. She marveled at seeing seven Sisters running and playing with the youth.

It was January of 1926 when she and nine other girls began the journey to becoming a Salesian Sister and a missionary. She was German and lived in Italy at the international novitiate. She remained in Italy until after her perpetual vows and in 1934 she received the news to “go to Patagonia as a missionary.” After receiving the blessing of Pope Pius XI she was on her way to mission land. She first set foot in Argentina on September 16th, 1934. From there she went to Patagonia and Bahía Blanca. Sister then went to several communities (to General Roca, at Junín de los Andes, to Viedma) where she was the superior, to Bolivia and La Paz and then to Lima, Peru. Finally, she arrived in Mexico on August 8th, 1969 as Provincial.

It was along the road from Junín de los Andes to Zapala that she realized how present Our Lady was. The car she was riding in overturned and Sister Antonieta and another Sister were pinned under the vehicle. It took eight men to lift the car and pull the Sisters to safety. Her companion died shortly after.

Sister Ersilia Crugnola, the previous provincial, gave to Sister Antonieta a little statue of the Blessed Virgin with which she blessed people. While Sr. Ersilia was in the hospital she gave this little statue of Mary Help of Christians to Sr. Antonieta saying: “I leave it to you. … She will take care of you. Make her work. …You must make her work.” Sister Antonieta was encouraged to give the blessing in the name of Mary in simplicity. This Mother of hers, Mary Help of Christians became her all. She was mother and guide. She was everything to her and she could experience her presence.

Sr. Antonieta has prayed for many people in all walks of life. She has prayed for the young and the old, the rich and the poor without distinction. She has been intercessor before our Lady of Guadalupe and Mary Help of Christians for so many and has heard an abundance of stories of gratitude for those who received favors through her prayers.

If Sister Antonieta were to be conversing with you face to face her advice to you would be: “have faith, confidence in Mary Most Holy, and cultivate the virtues of humility and simplicity. Nourish a life of prayer and a heart filled with goodness for children and young people. Do not be afraid to guide today’s young people because there are few families who educate in a Christian manner.”

May 11, 2017, was the official opening of the diocesan inquiry into the cause of her beatification and canonization.

LET US PRAY: Listen to our humble prayer which we make through the intercession of your missionary Mother Antonieta Böhm, whose heart burned with charity and who was tireless in helping all those in need. Grant that we who ask her intercession for the graces we need, may experience her charity and love for Mary Help of Christians while we pledge ourselves to imitate her courageous faith. Amen

~ Please contact us for graces received through the intercession of Servant of God Sister Antonieta Böhm, FMA ~
Abe and Grace Rangel are two of many alumni who not only carry the memories of being in a Salesian school run by the Salesian Sisters, but also focus on the reality that a strong foundation in the Catholic faith and a good education are invaluable. Through the ups and downs of daily life they have held on to the Christian and Salesian values implanted in them to be a living example of faith, love, and friendship beyond the classroom.

Within the Salesian atmosphere and family spirit, both Abe and Grace were set on a path leading them toward a vision not only of raising respectful, spiritual, and compassionate children, but also toward a reality of nurturing young people who would find, in turn, opportunities to make a difference for those not able to find their way on their own. The foundation they received from the Salesian Sisters was crucial to their path in life. Profoundly influenced by the Salesian Spirit they witnessed and experienced, and wanted to give to others what they received, and to contribute to society being an advocate for those who might need one.

Their first child was born with a rare chromosomal disorder and doctors gave little hope for the child’s future. The fear, sadness, and shock were changed into a positive energy, a driving force that led them to be advocates for children in need.

While Grace was spending her energy trying to obtain services for children in need Abe was on the streets of Los Angeles as a police officer. Abe recalled how St. John Bosco was devoted to the young, especially the less fortunate and while he encountered youth he realized God’s plan for him. He turned toward early intervention in the lives of young people and provided them with opportunities to avoid drugs and gangs. Neither Grace nor Abe stopped with their own children. They reached out to others.

Following their parents’ example, their two boys have learned to become compassionate young men. Abe and Grace believed that their first child provided an opportunity to return to God the gifts that He had so freely given to them as a couple. Together, they have responded well and reciprocated with strength and grace.

As part of the Salesian lay legacy, Grace and Abe have been true spiritual guides for the young. They continue to embrace the challenge of looking at daily situations with the eyes of Jesus.

Guidelines for Good Parent/Child Communication

- Be committed to communication
- Be honest with ourselves
- Take full responsibility for our actions/reactions
- Avoid mind games by judging intentions and/or motives
- Spend quality time with each other
- Listen and offer suggestions
- Be ready to apologize when appropriate
- Speak and listen with love
- Clarify the message we give
- Express gratitude when sharing with each other

SR. JUANITA CHAVEZ, FMA

Salesian alumni embrace the challenge of “educating with the heart.”
“Forgetting what lies behind, but straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal, the prize of God’s upward call in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13-14). On August 5th, Sr. Quynh and I publicly consecrated our lives to Christ with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. This scriptural quote was the theme of our First Profession, and it encapsulates our initial journey together in formation: four beautiful years full of God’s grace.

On August 5th, Sr. Quynh and I put our pasts behind us as we embraced the habit, the crucifix, and the Constitutions of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. It was by far the happiest day of our entire lives... a day of complete abandonment to the Lord. By assuming the three religious vows, we laid at Christ’s feet all that we possess (poverty), all that we are (chastity), and all that we will become (obedience) for the greater glory of God.

We professed our Vows in the presence of all our Sisters, family, and close friends: a tangible reminder that we are never alone... In fact, we are standing on the shoulders of giants. Just as our Sisters have accompanied us in the past, so too we press onward with the firm trust that they will guide and support us in the future. Our Religious Profession is not the end or the pinnacle of our formation—no, it is only the beginning of a lifelong adventure with the Lord. We give our thanks to God and ask Him and our Sisters to continue to accompany us in the future.

Support Young Sisters in Training by donating to the Vocation/Formation Fund

The 8th grade students at Mary Help of Christians School in Laredo, TX studied a unit on monastic life and created monasteries in small groups. They named their monastery, assigned roles to each person, decided what they would make to sell, came up with the community schedule and drew the design of their monastery. A few students dressed up as nuns or monks for their presentations. They were super excited in class the two days they had to work on the assignment. One of my favorite groups was the one who decided to have their monastery in Ireland. Guess what they chose to sell to make a living? Churros! Hopefully they would get enough business to sustain their monastery.
First Salesian Young Adult Night and Salesian High School Night

June 9th and June 16th at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in South Central Los Angeles were historic days as we hosted the First Salesian Young Adult Night and Salesian High School Night respectively. It was organized by the St. Thomas Youth and Young Adult Group leaders and the FMA working side by side to plan and dream together! The theme chosen was that of the upcoming 2018 Synod: Discernment, Faith & Accompaniment. The evening consisted of praise and worship, an icebreaker, a reflective prayer with a Marian moment, a dynamic talk about our theme, a Q & A session, a Volleyball/Soccer Game, delicious pizza, and plenty of time to chat and build new friendships in Christ!

It was an event of great collaboration with our SDB priests and the Salesian Sisters’ Formation Community in Bellflower. Fr. Alberto Chavez from St. Mary’s parish and Fr. Itchan Laygo from Bellflower gave the theme talk and shared their time, their wisdom, and their signature Salesian joy with our youth! They encouraged them to find meaning and purpose in their lives by listening to God’s stirrings and by responding to His invitations with peace and courage! For most of our youth, it was their first time meeting Salesian priests. They left edified by their joy-filled and Christ-like presence! Thank you Fr. Beto and Fr. Itchan!

Sr. Sandra Neaves and our three Postulants - Boram, Marie Fe, and Rachel were also there! They assisted with the setup, with decorations, but most importantly with their witness of joyful response to God’s call at this time in their own lives! They participated in all the activities and games alongside all our youth and took time to chat and listen to their stories. Thank you for who you are and for saying YES to our Lord!

We counted with the presence of the Pastoral Juvenil of Los Angeles Radio who transmitted the talks and presentations live on the radio. Thank you! We thank Carlos Gonzalez from Arizona who donated all the sports equipment for both nights! We also had a myriad of parishioners who joyfully volunteered to serve the young by setting up, decorating, donating, and helping distribute the delicious meal; people like Gina and Ciro Sotomayor, past pupils from Peru; Guadalupe and Raul Cerron whose son is considering entering with the Salesians; Guadalupe and Antonio Vazquez, past pupils from El Salvador; and our neighbors Sandra Hernandez, and Laura and Norma Caballero who donated drinks and food and who prayed for the fruitfulness of the event. Thank you!

A spirit of freedom, joy, faith, and enthusiasm filled the atmosphere those nights! Many of the youth heard about Don Bosco, Mother Mazzarello, and the Salesian Family for the first time, while others who had a previous taste of the Salesian Spirit became further convinced of their calling to belong to it as Cooperators, Priests, or Sisters! The 42 young adults and 33 adolescents experienced a renewed sense of Church, of God’s love and mercy, of mission, and purpose… For this we just couldn’t be more grateful! All for the glory of God! May Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello continue to inspire us in our collaborative ministry with youth and may Mary Help of Christians guide our young on their journey towards Jesus!
“Good morning young church!” were the words that we heard every morning as the doors opened. Twenty-two thousand high school youth poured into the exhibition hall at the Indianapolis Convention Center for the 2017 National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC). They gathered at NCYC and were challenged to take up the CALL TO... MORE. We Salesian Sisters, Priests and Brothers were ready to provide them the opportunities to do this... to BE SAINTS.

As thousands of youth streamed by our booth they could not help but notice the Salesian Priest and Sister who bravely threw themselves into the crowd smiling and calling out: “Do you have your wings yet?” “Do you want to do a one-minute service project?” That was all it took to grab their attention!

After getting a snap shot with their wings and trying their luck at the emoji scripture challenge, they did not hesitate to jump into the one-minute service projects. Whether they were writing prayers on butterflies for the youth in Syria, or decorating bears and choosing the bear’s destination (youth with AIDS in Haiti, orphans in Mexico or migrant youth in Northern California) one thing was for certain. The CALL TO... MORE... TO BE SAINTS can at times be answered in as little as one minute!

**One-minute Service Project Impact**

“It made me feel joy to tell other young people they are loved.” Amiah, Missouri 14yrs.

“It helped me feel that I am changing the world even if it is only in a little way.” Nicole, New York 17yrs.

“We have been getting free stuff all day, and it made me happy that we could give something to someone.” Gabriel, West Virginia 17yrs.

“Maybe one little bear may not make much of a difference for most, but it will for one young person.” Josh, New York 17 yrs.

“It made me feel good about myself because I was able to do a good deed.” Aliyah, Colorado 16 yrs.

“It made me realize that other people my age do not have much and I should be appreciative for all that I have.” Megan, South Carolina 15 yrs
Dear Sisters, I would like to offer

______ a single Mass ($15.00)  ______ a perpetual Mass ($25.00)

for ____________________________

(name of the person you wish to pray for)

who is ________ living ________ deceased.

Please enclose a check payable to Salesian Sisters. If you would like a Mass card sent, please provide the address information:

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If you have a Donor Advised Fund or “DAF” you can easily support the Salesian Sisters and their ministries for youth by simply advising your DAF administrator to make a distribution in whatever amount you choose. Visit our website at salesiansisterswest.org for funding opportunities and ways you can impact young people today.

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Many individuals are not aware that as part of their estate planning, they can also name Salesian Sisters and/or part of their ministry as beneficiary of the remaining funds in their DAF. As different DAFs have their own process and norms for accomplishing this unique bequeathing option, we advise that you ask your DAF administrator for specific instructions.

If you would like to learn more about making gifts from Donor Advised Funds, please contact Sr. Barbara Campbell, FMA at (210) 432-0089 ext 233 or by email at fmasuopt1888@gmail.com. We would be delighted to help guide you through this process and answer your questions.

When making a DAF gift to the Mission of the Salesian Sisters, please provide the following information to your administrator.

Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians
6019 Buena Vista Street
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Attn. Sr. Barbara Campbell, FMA

Thank you for making the Mission of the Salesian Sisters... Your Mission!
The Salesian Sisters of Mary Immaculate Province, proudly announce their latest book, an “Anniversary Edition” of their historical and pictorial journey as Sisters coming to America in 1908, extending up to the present time. Through the Sisters’ eyes, one can travel along the Pathways of Faith with them. Their difficult and joyous times, times of loss, and times of growth and expansion, all undertaken with great love of God and dauntless courage, according to the spirituality of Co-founders, St. John Bosco, and St. Mary Mazzarello.

This book is almost 400 pages in length, with color pictures* throughout. It comes with an 8 1/2” x 11” hardbound glossy cover, as seen above, with durable, glossy inside pages.

A True Keepsake!

*Many photos of the Sisters

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