LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR TO THE SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO

The Preparatory Document of the Synod of Bishops 2018 on “Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment”, the compass for our journey.

Dear Confreres,

I am writing this Letter to you with the desire to exhort you to be aware that we are living at this time a kairós, a propitious time for our service and our communion with the Church.

In fact on 16 October 2016, Pope Francis announced that in October 2018 the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the subject: “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment” will be held. It is the first time in the history of the Church that such an important and representative Assembly is dedicated in a direct and explicit way to the study of this subject. The Synod on New Evangelization (2012) and the Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii gaudium (2013) have dealt with the issue of how to carry out the mission of proclaiming the joy of the Gospel in the world of today. To the accompaniment of families in their encounter with this joy, on the other hand, were dedicated the two Synods (2014, 2015) and the Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris laetitia (2016). Continuing along the same path, the Holy Father has decided that the Church should examine herself on how to accompany young people in recognizing and welcoming the call to love and to love to the full. He has also asked young people themselves to help the Church to identify the most effective ways to proclaim the Good News nowadays. On 13 January 2017, therefore, the Secretariate of the Synod of Bishops offered for the attention of the whole Church a Preparatory Document (PD), to launch “the phase of the consultation of all the People of God”.

As Salesians of Don Bosco we are called to offer to the Church the gift of our charism, together with our reflections and pastoral experiences with and for the young. For this reason, today I am asking you to join in the efforts of the whole Church in the study of this Document and

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Fr. Lucian Lomello, SDB
Br. Jerry Weirich, SDB
Br. Tony Matse, SDB
Fr. Armand Oliveri, SDB
Fr. Mario Rosso, SDB
Fr. Avelino Lorenzo, SDB
Fr. Arthur Lenti, SDB

PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR SICK

Fr. Marc Rougeau.................5
Br. Jerry Weirich..................5
Br. John Rasor....................7
Fr. Steve Whelan...............14
Br. Vien Minh Nguyen.........17
Fr. Joe Boenzi...............27
Fr. Al Pestun...............28
Br. Jhoni Chamorro.........30
Fr. Moses Yun...............31

REST IN PEACE

Fr. Joseph Dinh
Former Salesian
Sept. 28, 2017

Fr. Larry Lorenzoni, SDB
Sept. 5, 2017
in responding to the attached Questionnaire, allowing yourselves first of all to be challenged by this question: following the convocation of this Synod and the publication of this Preparatory Document, how do we feel challenged in our charismatic experience? I ask you also to share your reflections with the local Church in the knowledge that they are given not only to the young people and the educators in our Salesians centres, but above all shared and discussed with them and with many other young people and educators engaged in the youth ministry of local Churches.

With a view to our being involved in this we have asked all the Provinces to reply to the Questionnaire and to send their replies to the Youth Ministry Department.

1. The first essential step to take must be that of reading the story of the young people who have been entrusted to us. This step implies being familiar with the challenges and the opportunities of the area in which we are called to bear witness to the love of God for the young, especially the poorest ones. The whole of the first part of the Preparatory Document, in fact, is based on the importance of a reading of the contemporary situation of the young. In the spirit of Evangelii Gaudium we are called to “go out” and to “listen”, so that we may then share the Good News. Knowing the real situation of the young people we meet is not a luxury we may allow ourselves but an obligation we cannot neglect. Not to do so would be a betrayal, turning our back on the cry of the young - often hidden but profound. The temptation of “we have always done it this way” together with the attitude “we already know the answer,” even if the question has changed, are the very real dangers that we have to recognize and overcome.

2. The second part of the Preparatory Document concentrates on the concepts of faith, discernment and vocation. These are closely linked: faith is the source of vocational discernment, “It makes us aware of a magnificent calling, the vocation of love. It assures us that this love is trustworthy and worth embracing, for it is based on God’s faithfulness which is stronger than our every weakness” (LF, 53). As Salesians we are called to recognise in this field some challenges and to confirm certain choices: our educative and pastoral proposal ought to offer to young people programmes that will
bring them to live an integral human experience. This proposal therefore ought to help the young people to live life as a gift to be welcomed and shared, and for which to be grateful. Finally, as educators and pastors, we are called to accompany the young in discerning their own vocation, and therefore in the construction of their own plan of life, in the knowledge that “every vocation is directed towards a mission” (PD II, 3).

The topics of discernment and of accompaniment require a serious and well-organized human, spiritual, and charismatic preparation for all those, consecrated and lay, involved in the Educative - Pastoral Community. I invite you to reject two pastoral temptations.

The first temptation that we encounter here is that of realizing the shortage of time and of the necessary resources for a strong commitment to the accompaniment of the young. To this temptation we respond by offering ourselves in the first place to become true and authentic witnesses in allowing ourselves to be accompanied: “guided guides”, who themselves have personal experience of spiritual accompaniment and only then are in a position to offer it to others, setting in motion suitable procedures of training in accompaniment for the lay people co-responsible in the Salesian mission.

The second temptation is that of being satisfied with a reductionist view of accompaniment, which seems to emphasise the individual role of the one who accompanies in this process. To this other temptation we respond offering to those young people in places where we find ourselves a progressive accompaniment on several levels: an accompaniment by the Salesian centre which welcomes the young and hands on to them a “family spirit”; an accompaniment by the educative-pastoral community which in its turn needs to be guided in co-responsibility in the Salesian mission and in the community discernment that precedes educative and pastoral planning; and a group accompaniment of the group to which the young person belongs, in a gradual process of learning and apostolate; finally, the personal accompaniment of the young person which is decisive for their vocational discernment.

The Preparatory Document tells us that the last kind of discernment is not a one-off but rather a “process by which a person makes funda-
mental choices, in dialogue with the Lord, and listening to the voice of the Spirit, starting with the choice of one’s state of life” (PD II, 2). In every young person educated in the faith the question arises: “How does a person live the Good News of the Gospel and respond to the call which the Lord addresses to all those he encounters, whether through marriage, the ordained ministry, or the consecrated life?” (PD II, 2). Mindful of the universal call to holiness (LG 40), we are called to accompany each young person, none excluded, in responding to this fundamental question, that is to say to the threshold of adult life, gradually but fearlessly proposing, as Don Bosco did, the goal of a high level of human and Christian life.

The third part of the Preparatory Document brings together some suggestions regarding pastoral action, identifying those involved, the places and the resources. We are invited to “accompany the young”, with the three attitudes of “going out”, “seeing” and “calling”, which describe the way Jesus encountered the people of his time. This sounds familiar to us sons of Don Bosco, and represents a further appeal to listen to the young and to be totally available to them in their needs, aware that the relationship of spiritual paternity is an extension of educational paternity. From the encounter with the young, well represented by the practice of assistance, there can develop accompaniment in area of vocational discernment and the subsequent construction of the young person’s plan of life.

When the Preparatory Document invites us to consider as those to whom youth ministry is addressed “all young people, none excluded”, there echoes in us a conviction that we have, as did Don Bosco, for whom “In every boy even the most wretched there is soft spot.”. In view of the high-quality pastoral service offered to young people with different needs therefore, there ought to be promoted a clear and participative experience of all the subjects of the community that educates and evangelizes: the Educative - Pastoral Community. On the part of the local Salesian Community and of the Salesian Province leadership this requires a commitment, that is ever more serious, professional and well-planned, to the formation of the lay co-workers, also as regards the accompaniment of the young.

The co-responsible co-involvement of the various subjects of pastoral action needs to be accompanied by their understanding of pastoral work as not being limited to a generic pastoral proposal, but as including procedures of community discernment based on a shared understanding of a Educative-Pastoral Plan. Then in the course of pastoral planning it is appropriate that the processes followed aim as far as possible at seeing the young people as capable of developing a sense of personal responsibility in the course of their human growth and development in the faith, in which the idea of a
progressive journey finds its place. In addition, I urge you to make an effort to provide lessons and experiences of prayer within the educative and evangelizing process, where the young people can have a taste of the value of silence and contemplation: “no discernment is possible without cultivating a familiarity with the Lord and a dialogue with his Word” (PD III, 4).

In the context of this letter, finally, I offer you three questions, that may guide your reflections on the challenges and the opportunities regarding the faith and the vocational discernment of the young nowadays. I am offering these three questions as material for reflection at the various Provincial Councils, at Rectors’ meetings, at meetings of Salesians in the quinquennium, and of those in practical training. I also ask you to consider the possibility of sharing these three questions with the different groups of the Salesian Family:

1. What are the proposals that at the level of the local Church we are making so that Evangelii Gaudium remains the compass for our pastoral journey?

2. What are the pastoral choices that we have in mind and/or could be proposing so that everyone - young and adults, parents and teachers, catechists and leaders, can feel part of a community that is educating to the faith, a community that is evangelizing?

3. What are the difficulties that can weaken the continuity and the consistency of the pastoral processes?

Following the invitation of the Holy Father (PD III, V), we entrust to Mary this process in which, together with the whole Church, we examine ourselves on how to accompany young people to accept the call to the joy of love and the fullness of life.

In Christ,

Ángel Fernández Artíme
Xth Successor of Don Bosco

Province Calendar

October, 2017

2 MO Quarterly Day of Recollection – North @ St. Clair’s Retreat
5 TH Bl. Albert Marvelli, Lay Person
8 SU Province Anniversary of 2017
Mass, 3:00 pm St. Dominic Savio, Social, Dinner at MPR, St. John Bosco, Bellflower.
9 MO Quarterly Day of Recollection - South
9-12 MO-TH Regional Day of Recollection - Quito, Ecuador
10-12 TU-TH Provincial Council Meeting, Soto St., Los Angeles
13 FR Bl. Alexandrina da Costa, Virgin
15-20 SU-FR Regional Provincials Meeting, Guadalajara
17-22 TU-SU Regional Province Youth Ministry Delegates, Guadalajara
18-20 WE-FR RETA Conference, Austin, Texas
22-24 SU-TU Salesian Family Conference, Guadalajara
24 TU St. Louis Guanella, Priest, Founder of the Servants of Charity
25 WE Trusts Meeting, Provincial Residence, 9:30 am.
29 SU Bl. Michael Rua, Priest (Not observed this year)
“We Are A Family
together we listen, together we love”

By Br. Jhoni Chamorro, SDB

Exactly a month ago, we started school here at Salesian College Preparatory in Richmond and this week, with the Triduum, the entire school officially starts off asking God for blessings upon this new school year. We keep the words of Fr. Angel Fernandez, our Rector Major from his past Aguinaldo (Strenna), “We are a Family” because those words are what really identifies not only to the students and faculty here at Salesian but to all those who visit the campus for various reasons. This reminds me how powerful these words are that even after death everyone is welcomed in a family spirit. I say this because on Tuesday while the students were having their lunch, we Salesians were attending the burial of Fr. Larry Lorenzoni. As I was walking towards the gate of the cemetery, which, as many of you know, is located in the backyard of the Salesian residence, a couple of students saw me and asked me what was going on? And I replied, a Salesian Priest died and we are having his funeral. What really moved my heart was that those same students started singing the famous song by Josh Groban – “On Eagles Wings.”
On Wednesday, our first day of the Triduum, we gathered in our faith families and we listened to the message of Pope Francis to young people and reflected on the biggest challenges we, and our friends face in this time. On Thursday the second day, as you can see in the pictures, students in their faith families enjoyed a delightful picnic where everyone at certain point started sharing the goodies they brought from home. Finally on Friday, the main focus of the day was to gather together as a family in the Banquet of the Eucharist. Fr. Mel as Director of the School, presided over the Mass and reminded us to always be open to listen to what God wants from us, but to also from one another. I am so happy to be part of the school during this first year of practical training. For me, these precious experiences remind me that it is not necessary that I be back in college in order to learn something, rather just being open and listening to simple gestures proves to me that God gives me valuable lessons to help me grow in my vocation. May we open ourselves to not complaining, but to listen to one another and continue creating that spirit of family that is a legacy from our beloved founder Don Bosco.
The Association of Salesian Cooperator’s Formation Committee of our Province and the St, Joseph’s Cooperator Center in Rosemead organized and delivered an information session for a group of about 20 people interested in learning more about the Salesian Cooperator vocation.

In addition to the guests interested in learning about the Cooperators, the session was also attended by 7 candidates that will be inducted and make their promise on the feast of Don Rua on October 29th. This will take place during the 9:30 am. Sunday Mass at the St. Joseph Chapel.

Most of the people attending today’s meeting as well as the 7 candidates to be inducted are Searchers that got to know the Salesians through their ministerial activities at St. Joseph.

Mike and Judy Alvarez, Formation Coordinators for the Province, were responsible for the organization and delivery of this orientation program, where everyone was able to receive first hand information about the Association, its initial and ongoing formation programs and the role it plays within the Salesian Family. The program included parts of the program presented by Br. John Raso, SDB, Provincial Delegate and Liz Gamarra, ASC Provincial Coordinator.

Everyone was treated to a delicious potluck that enhanced the experience of warm hospitality that is always reflected within our Salesian Family. We thank the St. Joseph’s Cooperator Center for hosting this event.
Bosco Tech’s (Rosemead, CA) - I’m hoping you can please help us spread the word. Bosco Tech’s (Rosemead, CA) award-winning band is in the running for $100,000 grant from Farmers Insurance Thank America’s Teachers competition. If we win, we will build the Farmers Community Bowl to bring the arts to the community.

We’re one of 15 finalists across the country. Ten will win, based on votes by the public and so we’re trying to spread the word. Individuals can vote every day from every email address but must verify the vote, via a follow-up email from the campaign, for it to count.

Here’s the link to see Music Director Daniel Almanza’s video entry. https://www.farmers.com/thank-americas-teachers/vote-for-a-teacher/vote-100k-proposal/

I’ve also attached a news story that ran on the competition, our newsletter version, and a couple of photos. I can provide more details or wording if it helps. Hope your day’s going well.

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October
Salesian Missionary Intention
In the Light of the Holy Father’s Prayer Intention

For Salesians in Vocational Training Centres
That vocational training centres continue to be schools of development and Christian humanism in the world of work.

One of the most distinctive contributions for which the Salesians are known and appreciated throughout the world is vocational training. It continues to be a priority of youth ministry: educating and preparing young people to enter the world of work. This precious mission requires of us professional competence, educational wisdom and evangelising boldness that respond to the new challenges in the world of work.
October, missionary month par excellence! The whole Church stirs up and wakes up, recognizing once again its deep missionary roots. Pope Francis, through his message for the World Mission Day 2017, reminds us of the synodal and youthful path that we are already going through together: “Young people are the hope of the mission. The person of Jesus and the good news proclaimed by him continue to fascinate many young people” (No. 8). We have just seen this fascination in Valdoccio on the face of each of the young Salesians from around the world, members of the newly commissioned 148th Missionary Expedition. We have also admired it in many Provinces all over the world. We see the courage and enthusiasm of so many young people who give to God and to the world a generous part of their lives through the Salesian Volunteer Movement. Our common missionary responsibility, Pope Francis concludes, needs the “rich imagination and creativity of young people” (No. 8). It is, indeed, the young who are renewing the missionary spirit in our houses and Provinces. May they keep us awake!

In this missionary month of October we encourage you to study deeper the message from the Holy Father. For lack of space we share, just a few phrases:

“This Day invites us to reflect anew on the mission at the heart of the Christian faith. The Church is missionary by nature; otherwise, it would no longer be the Church of Christ, but one group among many others that would soon end up serving their purpose and passing away. So it is important to ask ourselves certain questions about our Christian identity and our responsibility as believers in a world marked by confusion, disappointment and frustration, and torn by numerous fratricidal wars that unjustly target the innocent. What is the basis of our mission? What is the heart of our mission? What are the essential approaches we need to take in carrying out our mission? [...]"

The Church’s mission, directed to all men and women of good will, is based on the transformative power of the Gospel. The Gospel is Good News filled with contagious joy, for it contains and offers new life: that of the Risen Christ who, by bestowing His life-giving Spirit, becomes for us the Way, the Truth and the Life (cf. Jn 14: 6). He is the Way that invites us to follow him with confidence and courage. In following Jesus as our Way, we experience Truth and receive His Life, which is fullness of communion with God the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. That life makes us free from every kind of selfishness and is a source of creativity in love.

The Church’s mission, then, is not to spread a religious ideology, much less to propose a lofty ethical teaching. Many movements throughout the world inspire high ideals or ways to live a meaningful life. Through the mission of the Church, Jesus Christ himself continues to evangelize and act. Her mission thus makes present in history the kairos, the favourable time of salvation. Through the proclamation of the Gospel, the risen Jesus becomes our contemporaries, so that those who welcome him with faith and love experience the transforming power of His Spirit, who makes humanity and creation fruitful even as the rain does with the earth [...]

Thank God, many significant experiences continue to testify to the transformative power of the Gospel. I think of the gesture of the Dinka students who, at the cost of his own life, protected a student from the enemy Nuer tribe who was about to be killed [...]. We can think too of countless testimonies to how the Gospel helps overcome narrowness, conflict, racism, tribalism, and to promote everywhere, and among all, reconciliation, fraternity and sharing [...].

Young people are the hope of the mission. The person of Jesus and the Good News He proclaimed continue to attract many young people. They seek ways to put themselves with courage and enthusiasm at the service of humanity. There are many young people who offer their solidarity in the face of the evils of the world and engage in various forms of militancy and volunteering [...]. How beautiful it is to see that young people are ‘street preachers’, joyfully bringing Jesus to every street, every town square and every corner of the earth!”
Fr. Thomas Uzhunnalil teaches us apostolic spirituality

These days we celebrated in Rome with great joy the release of our missionary brother, Fr. Thomas Uzhunnalil, who had been kidnapped in Yemen on March 4, 2016 and was released in September this year. As everyone knows, he has had an exciting meeting with the Pope and our Rector Major. Though tired and weighing 30 kg less, he communicated his experience with great serenity and peace. Also the group of missionaries who are going through the ongoing formation course in Rome met him. We share with you some elements of his apostolic spirituality.

- The first thing he asked for when he arrived in Rome was the sacrament of Reconciliation. Not having this gift for 18 months had been a heavy burden for him.
- Though he could not celebrate the Eucharist sacramentally, he repeated its prayers every day from memory. In fact, he made of his cross a continuous Eucharist.
- He was not allowed to read, write, walk; he could only think ... His thoughts were a continuous prayer for the Church, the Congregation, young people, the sisters who had been killed, his mission in Yemen, the Holy Father and also his captors ... He reminds us of Paul’s urging, ‘Pray without interruption.’
- The secret that enabled him to live his imprisonment with serenity was his full conformation to God’s will. He said that after he had put his life completely in God’s hands and only to do his will he felt great peace, which allowed him to sleep at night with great serenity. And this conformation to the divine will was not merely his personal offering; it was the result of his obedience to the Congregation that had asked of him to serve in Yemen. According to him, when obedience is seen as a response to the will of God, it becomes a source of serenity and peace.
- A witness of Christ. When he was taken to the Islamic commander, he was asked direct and clear whether he was a Muslim, and he replied, ‘I am a Christian.’
- Both in his private conversation and in his lectures, he showed a great attitude of forgiveness. He certainly suffers deep pain from the killing of his sisters, but he did not harbour any hatred or resentment. He spoke respectfully of his captors.
- The conviction that in God’s plan each one has his own specific mission. Everyone is called to a unique and irreplaceable mission.
- A feeling of gratitude was constant in his speech. Gratitude to God for his life and his delivery from captivity, gratitude to Mary Help of Christians who, he felt, was very close to him; gratitude to the Church, to the Congregation, to every Christian who offered prayers and sacrifices for his release. There have been so many testimonies of just ordinary believers on all continents who daily offered prayers and sacrifices for him.

Let us implore the Lord to continue sending to his abundant harvest.

Don Martin Lasarte SDB

Blessed Maria Troncatti (1883-1969), Daughter of Mary Help of Christians and a great missionary in the Amazon rainforest, among the Shuar of Ecuador. She worked with great tenacity for the promotion of women and the freedom of choice of one’s partner in life. When it was announced that, for the first time ever, a Christian marriage was to be celebrated in the rainforest, where for the first time the partners, both of Shuar’s tribe, had made their own free choice of each other, not pre-arranged by their relatives, it was a great joy for her. She then wrote in a letter: “We are all here for them: for the big and the small, for the sick, for the savage and for the civilized.”

FOR SALESIANS IN PROFESSIONAL TRAINING CENTRES

So that vocational training centres may continue to be schools of Christian growth and humanism in the world of work.

Vocational training is one of the most distinguished contributions for which Salesians are known and appreciated all over the world. It continues to be a priority of Youth Ministry today: to support and educate young people to enter the workplace. This precious mission requires of us professional competence, educational wisdom and evangelizing audacity to give a meaningful answer to the ever-changing challenges of the world of work.
The Dream Act of 2017 (S. 1615 / HR. 3440) was recently introduced in Congress as a bipartisan effort. The bills are intended to protect immigrant youth who entered the United States as children and know America as their only home. The bills offer qualifying immigrant youth “conditional permanent resident status” and a path to full lawful permanent residency and eventual citizenship. These bills would protect numerous youth, including the over 780,000 individuals who received temporary relief from deportation and employment eligibility through the Department of Homeland Security’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

The young people S. 1615 / H.R. 3440 seeks to protect are contributors to our economy, veterans of our military, academic standouts in our universities, and leaders in our parishes and communities. As Catholics, we have long supported DREAMers as we believe in protecting the dignity of every human being, especially that of our children. We ask you to renew your support for DREAMers by urging your Senators to co-sponsor S. 1615 and your member of Congress to co-sponsor H.R. 3440. You can do so by sending the following messages:

Dear Senator,

As a person of faith, I stand with the U.S. Catholic Bishops and write to express my strong support for the “Dream Act of 2017” (S. 1615). The young people protected by this bill are contributors to our economy, veterans of our military, academic standouts in our universities, and leaders in our parishes and communities. As Catholics, we have long supported DREAMers as we believe in protecting the dignity of every human being, especially that of our children. Among those protected by this bill are Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, a program that has benefited over 780,000 young people. DACA has ensured that recipients are able to live their lives free of the anxiety that they could be deported at any time to a country they do not know and separated from their families. We believe immigrant youth deserve continued protection and a path to citizenship.

I urge you to:
• Support and co-sponsor S. 1615, the Dream Act of 2017; and
• Continue to work towards larger legislative reform of our immigration laws.

The faith community stands with you in support of the DREAM Act of 2017, S. 1615, and vows to work with you to reform our immigration system in a humane and common-sense manner.

Thank you.

Dear Representative,

As a person of faith, I stand with the U.S. Catholic Bishops and write to express my strong support for the “Dream Act of 2017” (H.R. 3440). The young people protected by this bill are contributors to our economy, veterans of our military, academic standouts in our universities, and leaders in our parishes and communities. As Catholics, we have long supported DREAMers as we believe in protecting the dignity of every human being, especially that of our children. Among those protected by this bill are Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, a program that has benefited over 780,000 young people. DACA has ensured that recipients are able to live their lives free of the anxiety that they could be deported at any time to a country they do not know and separated from their families. We believe immigrant youth deserve continued protection and a path to citizenship.

I urge you to:
• Support and co-sponsor HR. 3440 the Dream Act of 2017; and
• Continue to work towards larger legislative reform of our immigration laws.

The faith community stands with you in support of the DREAM Act of 2017, H.R. 3440, and vows to work with you to reform our immigration system in a humane and common-sense manner.

Thank you.
SAN FRANCISCO, OCT. 1 - Mr. Enrique, from Giampolini Courtney repairing the statues symbolizing the Four Evangelists on the façade of Saints Peter and Paul Church in San Francisco. The surface around the statues was flaking, with the wear and tear of decades. Saints Peter and Paul thanks a generous parishioner who covered the cost of the repairs!

SDB Development Department

Salesian Provincial Office in San Francisco is seeking an experienced Administrative Assistant for their Development Department.

Expertise and knowledge in data base management, Raise’s Edge and MS Office (required). Knowledgeable of Vietnamese and Spanish would be beneficial.

Full-time position includes processing mail, data entry, and other clerical duties.

Send resume with compensation requirements to Greg Cattalini: gcattalini@Salesiansf.org. Questions can be directed to Mr. Cattalini at (415) 441-7144, x217 or Father Tho Bui, x221. For more information on the Salesians, please visit www.donboscowest.org.
When Cucumber Meets Peanut Butter – It is a Hit at the Rock Out Youth Poverty Concert!

By Sheila Kun, Cooperator

The entertainment and the sports industries have a very robust schedule in October. Look at all the events in just one weekend – the Coldplay concert at the Rose Bowl, the first National League Dodger’s playoff game at the Dodger’s Stadium and last of all, but not the least, our annual Rock Out Youth Poverty concert, hosted by our Youth Ministry at Bellflower. Personally, Louis and I chose to attend the latter. Why? The answer is simple. There were plenty of parking spaces, there was no metal detector checks, there was still bright sunlight when we drove home after the event (an important factor for seniors like us), and we were with our Salesian families.

Our Province Care Ministry booth hosted a poster presentation that captured the attention of many. For those of you who could not be at our booth, here are the highlights of our event.

The 20 second presentation covered topics that were applicable to all ages. For the seniors and folks with special medical needs, the right hand corner of the poster says: No SOS. This is a very simple acronym to remember: no sugar, oil or salt. Many youngsters responded: “Wow, no sugar, no oil, or salt? That is tough.” I responded by saying that for people with special needs, this might be a life-saving or life-sustaining approach to keep their heart, vascular or endocrine systems healthy. For the younger folks, they might want to interpret as no “added” salt or sugar, or no fried food. The bottom of this side also noted NO on sodas, canned food and processed red meat. This picture is applicable for all ages. Chemicals are not good for anyone!
I am approaching the subject of weight gingerly. Why? I don’t want people to think that I am critical of you just because you might be on the “heavy” side. I want to have a deeper understanding of weight and how that affects your health. For the coming weeks, we will unravel how our weight could change our health and more importantly what can we do about it. I dare not offend you by making broad statements about weight or obesity. Hence I was extremely happy to come across this website “Weight Matters” in their introductory statement about why weight matters. It begins with an opening statement which reflects my belief and my motivation to begin our conversation on weight.

The issue of weight matters to people in many different ways. It evokes many different emotions and can often be difficult to talk about with your healthcare provider, spouse, friend, loved one or others. The most important reason why weight matters is because of your health.

There are many health implications that accompany excess weight, such as diabetes, hypertension, sleep apnea and others. Sometimes weight can even affect emotional health as well. It is not uncommon for someone dealing with weight issues to be affected by depression or a lack of self-confidence.

Gaining excess weight and realizing the health implications is not always the easiest thing to recognize. In fact, most Americans do not realize that they are affected by excess weight or obesity, or even at risk for weight-related conditions. This is why it is so important for you to realize that YOUR WEIGHT DOES MATTER!

Let me begin by going into the physiological component of a fat cell this week. From Wikipedia in its definition of Adipocyte: Adipocytes, also known as lipocytes and fat cells, are the cells that primarily compose adipose tissue, specialized in storing energy as fat.

Your homework assignment from the Care Ministry this week: get your weight and height ready. Next week we will need these measurements to know your BMI (Body Mass Index).

On the left corner of the poster is a list of vegetables and fruits that are good snack choices. “Color your plate” is the theme. Think about the variety of colored vegetables and fruits that you could have instead of a donut or ice cream.

The middle of the poster is one of the key messages for the youngsters: the Big M. No, it is not eating at McDonald. The “M” is for MODERATION. It is not easy to say no to some food choices that you occasionally crave. The key is moderate. Perhaps think about having 3 bites and you are done?

The participants were invited to sample a variety of healthy snack: cucumber, cucumber with a different touch, adding peanut butter to it, yam – one of the most nutritional vegetables, banana – a fruit that you do not need to spend more money on the organic brand, peanuts that are roasted with no salt, and wheat crackers. The consensus from the youngsters: “I do not expect cucumber and peanut butter are such a good combination as a snack!” This item was a sell-out sampler!

Louis and I enjoyed the opportunity to interact with our Salesian youngsters on one to one basis, answering some simple health related questions relevant to their age group such as sleep hygiene, weight reduction strategies and food choices. We thank the Youth Ministry for their invitation to this fun event.

Your homework assignment from the Care Ministry this week: List your favorite healthy snacks and share with your friends.

The Care Ministry welcomes your comments/suggestions: kunlouis@gmail.com