Asia is a rich mosaic of cultures and religions. This plurality does not always find peaceful coexistence in tolerance and freedom in all regions. We have a precious mission - that of educating young people to respect the sacred convictions of every person and also to help young Christians to have the courage to testify to their own faith in the Lord Jesus in all serenity and firmness.

**PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR SICK**

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**JANUARY BIRTHDAYS**

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**LEONARD FREED**

December 2017 was the 40th anniversary of the death of Fr. Leonard Freed, SDB, a pioneering Salesian in the United States. His legacy lives on through the work of the Leonard Freed Cultural Foundation. 

**LET US CULTIVATE the art of LISTENING and of ACCOMPANIMENT**

**STRENGA 2018**

of the Rector Major Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime

**Sir, give me this water**

»Sir, give me this water«
III. AN ENCOUNTER THAT TRANSFORMS LIFE: "Accompanying".

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, «What do you want?» or, «Why are you speaking with her?» Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, «Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?» They left the city and were on their way to him. (…)

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, «He told me everything I have ever done». So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, «It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world» (John 4:27-30, 39-42).

- The Samaritan woman has entered the evangelical scene as "a woman of Samaria" and comes out "knowing the source of living water" to the point of feeling the need to run to announce to her fellow countrymen what has happened to her; through her testimony, she allows many to approach Jesus.
- Having abandoned the jar, the woman runs to the village to talk to her people about this man. And she will ask them an important question: «Could not this man be the one Israel has been waiting for, for such a long time?»
- Likewise, as can be inferred from the context, Jesus makes his disciples understand that he is fulfilling the will of the Father; that will which is the Life of his life and which he wishes to transmit to others.
- Jesus does not offer an extension of knowledge and learning to the people he meets, as in this case with the Samaritan woman, but rather gives them a proposal to grow and change their lives. The very same "Jacob’s well", which is the symbol of the wisdom that comes from the Law, loses its value and is replaced by the "living water".
- The image of God, which is communicated in the encounter with Jesus, is not the image of the impassive, distant, philosophically cold god. On the contrary, Jesus reveals the God who gives Life, who can be called Father, who does not allow himself to be locked up, controlled or possessed, because he is Spirit (worship in Spirit and truth).
- The conclusion of the meeting goes beyond what one would expect in a normal ending, namely that the woman returns to her ordinary life with the jar full of water. On the contrary, the jar, which the woman abandons empty to go and call her own, speaks to us of a gain and not of a loss.

Accompanying, like Jesus

There are numerous biblical stories, which are, in the first place, narrations of the accompaniment God ensures to his people over time.
At the border of the two Testaments, John the Baptist appears as the first spiritual companion of the Gospels; before Jesus himself, John was able to give witness and prepare the way because God had spoken to his heart.

Jesus himself, in so many passages of the New Testament, becomes a neighbour and companion in the street to communicate and to meet in a personal way with the people of his time.

The encounter of the Lord with the Samaritan woman shows how the Spirit of God can act in the heart of every man and woman: that human heart which, because of frailty and sin, often feels confused and divided, “attracted to different and even contrary feelings”. 19

In the face of this human reality personal accompaniment appears as a very valid means of the Christian spiritual tradition, providing believers with instruments and resources that allow them to recognize the presence of the Lord, his demands and his calls.

How can we define accompaniment? «As a form of permanent dialogue among companions to welcome Life, accompanying life» 20; a dialogue whose ultimate aim is to foster the relationship between the person and the Lord, helping them to overcome any obstacles.

As Jesus did in the encounter with the people of his time, in every experience of accompaniment the following are necessary:

- A loving gaze, like the one of Jesus in the vocational call addressed to the twelve (John 1:35-51).
- An authoritative word, as the one Jesus pronounced in the synagogue of Capernaum (Lk 4:32).
- The capability to become neighbour, like Jesus in the encounter with the Samaritan woman (John 4:3-34. 39-42).
- Choosing to walk side by side, to become a companion on the street, like Jesus with the disciples of Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35).

For us, accompanying teenagers and young people, their families and adults in general, will involve:

- Knowing the way they walk, to what extent they are located and where they are heading, so as to be able to walk together.
- Ensuring that the encounter takes place as an opportunity for a human and humanizing relationship, and not a utilitarian one. We are well aware of the importance of the encounter in Salesian pedagogy, which focuses on the person of the youth and of each person, with personal relationships that are based on mutual knowledge, on the concern for the good of the other, on understanding, empathy and trust. And we know that Don Bosco was in this an exceptional, incomparable teacher.
- With an attitude of listening (again, one refers to the art of listening as the foundation of accompaniment!), which makes it possible to know and understand the reality of the other.

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19 Cf. PD, p. 50.
The path they are taking, the situation of pain, lack of hope, fatigue or search in which they find themselves, as well as the dreams, desires and ideals hidden in their heart.

It will always be an encounter of mediation, because the true Accompanying Person is the Holy Spirit. Mystic St. John of the Cross strongly affirms this when he writes: «These souls in this matter, but the principal guide is the Holy Spirit, who is never neglectful of souls»[21]. And this is because it will never be said enough that the travelling companion of our entire educational, pastoral and evangelizing activity is the Holy Spirit.

The accompanying person and companion in the street must be a witness and announcer of the action of the Spirit in the person accompanied, but in a discreet way, remaining close, occupying only the space that belongs to him and not another one. Verily, the educator and evangelizer are formed as spiritual companions in the founding experience of having first encountered Him. This is so clear, explicit and radical for the fact that «the true educator of faith is the one who at a certain point must set himself aside, pulling himself back by creating that "empty place" which can only be occupied by the Lord»[22], in order to allow, as the fruit and result of this accompaniment, the attainment of a true relationship or encounter of the youth, of the person accompanied, with God.

Discovering how God manifests Himself in our experience to the point of finding ourselves encountered by Him.

Being aware that the initiative will always be God's; and (being also aware) that responsibility and freedom will be ours.

Don Bosco, Educator and Spiritual Guide of His Young People[23]

To speak of Don Bosco as an educator means to highlight and be aware of the close relationship between his educational mission and the spiritual accompaniment of young people, and of its significance for their formation.

In order to be very brief and to underline only what is essential, I will highlight some elements that I consider to be of great value.

Don Bosco is an evangelizer-educator who cares, with great intuition, to create an attractive educational environment, rich in educational proposals and human relationships; Don Bosco never renounces to gradually take concrete steps in the Christian formation of his youth.

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Don Bosco is for us the brilliant companion of his children, because he does not limit himself to personal dialogue, or to the celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation (simply called confession at that time), but who sees everything in relationship and united with the other elements of educational action and daily life in its various moments.

In Don Bosco's style, both the accompanying and the accompanied persons are not limited to meeting each other on the basis of a specific agenda on a set day or time, but daily share environments, recreation spaces, and moments of work, prayer and joy.

This leads one to think that mutual knowledge, trust and even friendship could easily be born; this favoured trust and the willingness to let oneself be guided.

In Don Bosco, spiritual paternity is the consequence and the ripe fruit of educational paternity, which his children live with him on a daily basis. We find this paternity magnificently described in the following expressions: «For each boy, Don Bosco in his capacity as confessor and spiritual director is the one who has welcomed him with affection, sustains him, instructs him, educates him and encourages him to give the best of himself in the community and in his daily work. Next to him there are assistants, educators and young friends with whom one can share the same ethical tension, the same spiritual values, in a stimulating and fruitful dialogue exchange».

Ultimately, the emotional tone and the creation of trust and sympathy are for Don Bosco fundamental conditions of his educational method.

Don Bosco is always and at all times the educator who not only provides his children with food, health and education. His educational commitment is always oriented towards the Christian education of his children. It is for this reason that we can affirm that «spiritual accompaniment to Christian perfection is an essential and necessary part of Salesian pedagogy».

It is very enlightening to know that, in his accompaniment, Don Bosco did not establish the same relationship and bond with each of his children, but he did it with "different tonalities and degrees". The situation was not the same with the boys he met only at the festive oratory on Sunday evenings and in confession, or with those who lived day and night in Valdocco, and, among them, with those who showed to be vocationally sensitive and available.

A characteristic that “must be very ours”, because it was Don Bosco's, is that of always taking steps towards the creation of communities of life, where cordial encounters, the continuous presence, the empathic closeness of educators (which is typical of Salesian assistance) that arouses trust and friendship, are the usual characteristic of that community of adolescents, young people and adults.

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24 A. GIRAUDO, o.c., p. 149.
25 Ibid.
The goal towards which he always tended, as far as possible, was "the conquest of the heart". This is wonderful! If one only thinks of what this can mean in a true evangelizer and educator!

✓ We also know that for Don Bosco the quality of the educational environment, which had to be offered and built together with the youth in Valdocco, was the most effective accompaniment for each one, whatever the situation in which they met.

✓ In his educational activity Don Bosco tries to understand the children, to be aware of their juvenile needs and desires; so in this educational relationship the young person feels understood, welcomed, supported and loved.

The children's trust in their friend, educator and father, makes them open their hearts and accept to travel with him along paths that make them discover new and attractive realities.

An example of great significance and enlightening at the same time is offered by the initial resistance of young Michele Magone – as Don Bosco himself narrates – who only enjoyed singing, shouting, running and jumping\textsuperscript{26}, until he reaches a "crisis" that upsets him, and a change that takes place thanks to the conversion of his heart\textsuperscript{27} and makes him experience a great joy and an unexpected spiritual journey.

For all this we affirm that «Don Bosco is a model: he tends to identify in himself the educator, the confessor and the spiritual director; he insists on affectionate welcome, on goodness, on magnanimity and the care for details, on the intensity of affection shown in such a way that the youth may entrust themselves to him, open their hearts and collaborate in the formation activity with prompt and hearty obedience»\textsuperscript{28}.

All this is achieved through a pedagogy of processes that is so common in spiritual tradition. «Christian life is lived in a progressive way, according to distinct degrees of depth and fullness, and is constantly open to an ever greater growth»\textsuperscript{29}.

- According to processes that must not be forced from either inside or outside.
- To the point of becoming aware of the process and of making it one's own, since it is the Spirit who unleashes it in each one.

\textit{(continued next intouch)}

\textsuperscript{26} G. BOSCO, Cenno biografico sul giovanetto Magone Michele allievo dell’Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales. Seconda edizione. Tipografia dell’Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales, Torino 1866, 15.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 16-24.
\textsuperscript{28} A. GIRAUDO, o.c., p. 160.
One day a homeless person pushed a lady who was exiting the front door of the rectory, made his way to the pastor’s office and threatened to kill him. Thankfully, two members of the AA group were at a meeting and “escorted” him out. Opening the front door to feed the poor posed a problem. Worried about his secretary and staff, Fr. Jesse thought of a solution to continue feeding the hungry and the poor at any time that the office was open. He recalled a turntable at his doctors office. Pictured is a type of porthole through which the staff can now safely “feed the hungry”.

Food Program Continues
Bingo Night Success

Fr. Diego Molina, from Spain, with Srs. Roble Cavazos and Celine Lomeli at St. Mary’s Elementary Bingo Night.

School parent volunteers as caterers for the Bingo Night dinner.

Parents sponsor fundraiser, Bingo Night.
Bosco Meets Salesian

Dominic Savio Community of Los Angeles met Don Bosco Tech Alums during the Christmas holidays.

Traditional statues were brought in by the Oaxaca natives in preparation for the Christmas season.

Christmas Events

Part of a large donation of ceramic miniature buildings used to decorate the Nativity scene.

The Miracle Worker

Costume design for The Miracle Worker, a play set for production mid-January. Four schools are involved: Salesian High School, Bishop County-Loretto High, Mendoza High and St. Mary's Elementary.
My dear Confrères, receive my fraternal and affectionate greetings.

As last year, on this 8th December 2017, from the house of the “Sacred Heart” in Rome where we dwell, with the Basilica before my eyes, I write this letter to you. I do it with the same intention as last year. This is a very significant day to make a missionary call “ad gentes” in all the provinces of the world and to all the confrères who feel called by the Lord to live in a special way our missionary vocation. We are all missionaries of the young. However, since the beginning of our Congregation, the Lord has certainly made many confrères feel this missionary call in a very personal and special way, so that the Gospel and the Salesian mission can reach the young where there is greater need, or where they are waiting for us or where we have not yet arrived.

During this year, the Lord granted us the grace to have back among us Fr. Tom Uzhunnalil. He, a missionary in Yemen, gave us a great testimony of profound spirituality and great missionary apostolic interiority. And this donation and sacrifice of his will undoubtedly produce much fruit.

On this day, my missionary call intends to resound also in the hearts of many confrères, in all the Provinces and Salesian presences in the world, waiting for generous responses. Don Bosco had many Salesians close to him and sent them on his first expeditions. In his name, I address a strong invitation to all those confrères who feel in their hearts this desire aroused by the Lord.

- Every year, we see a beautiful response of about 20 missionaries sent all over the world. However, I am very confident that we can count on an even greater number to bring the Gospel and the education of children and the young to many more people and many more places.

- Apostolic forces are not the same in all parts of the Congregation. There are provinces and nations with many vocations and others that are experiencing great poverty. Our fraternity and the feeling that we are all Salesians of Don Bosco in the one Congregation throughout the world, and not only for my country or my province, still allows us to reach where we are most needed.

- There are still adolescents and young people waiting for us, and among them the poorest, those abandoned and most at risk. The missions of Amazonia, of the Andes of Latin America, and especially indigenous populations are waiting for us; people at the borders between countries, in refugee camps as in Uganda, are waiting for us. Eastern Europe is also open to our presence. Malaysia and Gambia will shortly be spaces for our presence. From many other countries in which we are already present we are called to go to other truly missionary areas.
For all this, my dear Confrères, I strongly urge you to generosity. The generosity, first of all, of the confrères who feel this explicit call from the Lord. The generosity of the provinces, of rectors and, especially, of provincials so as not to bury any missionary demand of the confrères, especially of the young Salesians who have great ideals. We cannot forget our origins nor can we forget our charismatic identity, as our Constitutions remind us: “Peoples still awaiting the gospel message were the special object of Don Bosco’s concern and apostolic effort. We look upon missionary work as an essential feature of our Congregation” (Const. 30).

I have no doubt that the Lord will bless our generosity.

I remind you the procedure to follow. When the Rector Major receives a telephone call, a letter, an email from a confrère who expresses this desire, the Dicastery for Missions begins a serene and profound discernment in dialogue with the confrère and with the Provincial, and successively informs the Rector Major of the steps taken. Many times discernment brings out the suitability of the candidate. Sometimes it does not. But this is always done in the search for the good of the person and of the mission.

This is my appeal, dear Confrères, and I invite you to pray for this all over the Congregation. There are many people who have not yet received the announcement of the Gospel. There are many young people who need a friend, brother and father who the Salesians will be, going out to meet with them. We will share life with the young, help them prepare for life and offer them “listening and accompaniment”, always seeking their good. (Strenna 2018).

May Mary, the Help of Christians, bless this generosity and may Don Bosco accompany us to be authentic missionary disciples of Jesus.

With affection

Fr. Angel Fernández A., SDB
Rector Major

Witness of Salesian Missionary Sanctity
Fr. Pierluigi Camerani, SDB, Postulator General for the Causes of Saints

El Blessed Titus Zeman (1915-1969), martyr for vocations. He has in a certain way embodied the fundamental steps in the process of discernment. Through clandestine transport of young people abroad, he offered young people the opportunity to discover their vocation and to fulfill it. His faith, inspired by the Word of God, was the source of his choice to accompany young confreres at a time of persecution in their own country. He became their companion on their journey of welcoming with generosity the gift of a vocation as a grace of God.

For the Salesians of Asia

Salesian Missionary Intention

So that in Asian countries, Christians, as well as other religious minorities, may live their faith with complete freedom.

Asia is a rich mosaic of cultures and religions. This plurality does not always find peaceful coexistence in tolerance and freedom in all regions. We have a precious mission - that of educating young people to respect the sacred convictions of every person and also to help young Christians to have the courage to testify to their own faith in the Lord Jesus in all serenity and firmness.
Are We on the Right Track?

By Sheila Kun (Salesian Cooperator)

Have you been thrown into a situation where you were totally unprepared for? I had. The year was 1964. I belonged to the Legion of Mary at my high school Sacred Heart Canossian College in Macau. As part of our voluntary work, visiting the sick was a weekly routine. Upon entering the first convalescent hospital for cancer patients, I could smell the odor of terminal illness. The feeble faces of the patients greeted Sr. Mary and the Legion of Mary youngsters timidly. In our Chinese culture, terminal illness was not something that you wanted to owe up to or discuss with strangers. We were scared too. No one prepared the Legion of Mary youngsters to interact with terminal patients in their visit. We just went because we were Christians, emulating the work of Jesus. Fifty years later, I was thrown into a situation where I was not prepared for either – a call by Fr. Tim Ploch to be one of the coordinators for the Elderly Ministry for our Province. Only this time I had at least 36 years of nursing experience under my belt and the smell of the hospital did not bother me any further. But where should we start this important ministry? Aging is what we all go through, there is no exception. However, there is no parenting class for aging. The mortality for death is 100%. Where should we start?

With the guidance of the provincial directors and especially the Elderly Ministry members Fr. Tom Prendiville and Bro. Ernie Martinez, we began to look at the need of our elderly in a different light. To begin with, we changed our ministry from Elderly Ministry to Care Ministry. The thinking behind this change in focus was obvious; we needed to approach aging not just reacting to the needs of elderly care and treatment options, we needed to have a comprehensive approach to healthy aging and graceful living.

There were two principles central to our belief to improve the health of our elderly:

1) An infrastructure within each community where the special needs of the elderly are identified and taken care of. This includes seeking resources to care for our elderly, both in terms of community resources and the tangible help or helpers needed to provide the care.
2) An approach to the understanding of aging that is different from the sickness model to a health promotion model. Grounded in our belief is that aging is inevitable, but we could embrace aging not with fear but thrive with healthier living. This idea guides us to the need for health education on chronic illnesses prevalence among seniors and preventive measures that promote better health such as nutrition and exercise.

With these two missions in mind, we set up goals that would improve the care and health of our confreres in the Province. One of our ambitious goals was to have volunteers in each site to promote the services for the seniors at each site. We quickly learned that through our individual experience with some local sites, reliance on volunteer work was difficult. The professional volun-
teers such as doctor, dentist, pharmacist, physical therapist, dietician, nurse or social worker were more available on an advisory level. Providing the actual physical care was not possible. However, the professionals on the Care Ministry Panel were helpful to direct and assist with care delivery.

Another observation was that it was the confreres living in the community who could be most effective in responding to the day to day need of the elderly with sustainable help from paid employees. We saw appropriate placement of care for elderly confreres, primarily with home care as the first option. Many of our elderly confreres enjoyed the pastoral love, compassion and loving attention from their fellow brothers.

The Care Ministry also has been diligent about health education. A weekly health related topic is available via InTouch. We have begun the health conversation since January of 2013 and we are still going strong with this education piece. The Care Ministry received good feedback on its weekly communication on its health promotion agenda. We are reaching audiences that are not only confreres but members of the Salesian Family who read InTouch.

Just like 50 years ago in Macau, the topic of an individual’s health issue and its record keeping for routine and emergency care is still work in progress. We are all very proud people. Giving up our independence and allowing others to help us is still not easy. Yet this is one of the initiatives that we need to work on as a Province. Look at the Kaiser system. Everything is electronically kept. Hence there is continuity of care, and there is no duplication in the provision of care. The community director and confreres in your community are your support system; they need to act responsibly to your medical need; the individual health issues need to be addressed by knowing what medical condition you have and how you want to be taken care of.

No one is prepared when illness strikes. We are not doctors or nurses. It is not expected of each confrere to be medically trained in your community. However, each confrere’s presence, his kindness, his understanding of what you are going through has been the basis of the success of many communities. No one is prepared 100% of our death either: there is no rehearsal for death. But we feel obligated to those who live at home with us to keep ourselves as healthy as possible. We owe it to our community. Likewise, the community owes you to keep you safe and as healthy as possible.

One of the newer trends that we also observed within the communities is the implementation of healthier lifestyle. Exercise is being embraced, so is better food choices. Because you live in a community, your dietary need is difficult and at times impossible. But we are working on better understanding of food and food preparation. After all, we believe that food is medicine.

One might ask: who is the “we” in the Care Ministry? We firmly believe that each confrere is a member of the Care Ministry. Let me ask you: Who can replace your presence, your pastoral love and your dedication to each other?

Your homework assignment from the Care Ministry this week: identify the important role that you play in the Care Ministry of your community.

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