Dear Salesian Family,

This past weekend, along with my family, I had the opportunity to spend time with Mary Domenichini and her daughter Cathy. Mary and her family were part of the outreach committee from Our Lady of Fatima Parish in San Clemente who sponsored hundreds of Vietnamese families in 1975 who were seeking refuge and asylum after the fall of Saigon. Through their generous support those initial years of resettlement, my family, like so many others, was able to begin to assimilate to this country—our new home. It was Mary who miraculously found my father a job as a tailor at a local dressmaking shop and who drove my mother to countless ESL classes so she could be empowered as a working mom. It was also Mary and her family who braved the racist attacks that sometimes would befall my parents.

During this recent visit, Mary recounted those early years and how often my parents were met with discrimination and the hateful rhetoric of the burden these new refugees were costing our tax payers, how “these people” were going to take our jobs, how immigrants should go back to where they came from, and to put it simply: that they were not welcomed here.

Aside from the tales of hardship, there were also heart-warming stories and anecdotes. One of which was one of my favorite family traditions: setting up the manger scene with my father. Each year, the ritual would be the same. As each figurine was taken out, cleaned, and strategically placed in their appropriate spot, my father would tell the story of how each character was important in the narrative of Jesus’ birth. He would always end with the figures of Joseph and Mary; recounting how they were seeking lodging and hospitality.

Little did I understand, and it was not until I was much older, that I truly appreciated this annual catechetical lesson and how much this simple tradition would shape my own worldview and that of my sister. For my father it was not only about setting up the manger scene and recounting the Christmas narrative, but it was also my father's way of teaching us the life lesson of hospitality. It was a lesson that was made real by Mary and her family as they welcomed our little migrant family into their home and into their lives some forty four years ago.

The hospitality that was extended to my family, and so many other Vietnamese refugee families, is the same hospitality I am invited to offer to others, especially to those who find themselves on the
peripheries—the refugees and immigrants of our own time. The refugee child who clutched to his mother fleeing from a war-torn Vietnam; seeking a new life and was given the opportunity to grow up, to study, and become a Salesian brother is the same child reflected in the lives of countless “Dreamers” and DACA recipients across this nation who want a chance to live out their own vocation and give back to this country they know as home.

As we enter these final days of Advent, whether through chanting the Christmas novena in community, celebrating Simbang Gabi, or Las Posadas, may our prayer be united with the many families who search for “posada”— shelter and refuge—and may they find in us and in our communities, places of hospitality and welcome. May we recognize and make room for the Josephs and Marys of today in those seeking asylum in the way we advocate and champion their dignity and just treatment. May the Christ Child who was born into poverty transform our hearts to proclaim the prophetic Christmas message of peace, justice, and love.

God’s blessings to you and your family,

Bro. Al Vu SDB
Province Coordinator of Education
Posadas
At St. Joseph Youth Renewal Retreat Center

By Sheila Kun RN, BA, BSN, MS, FCCP
Salesian Cooperator

What is the Posadas? One non-Hispanic parishioner asked? I handed her a pamphlet which basically gave her a rundown of what a Posadas is. Today, at St. Joseph, this parishioner experienced this beautiful Mexican tradition first hand.

The 12 children who participated in this re-enactment of Mary and Joseph’s cold and difficult journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem in search of shelter gathered bright and early before our 9:30 a.m. Mass. They were eager to tell us that they were angels, Mary, Joseph or the wise men. My favorite was the shepherd boy who indeed needed to be shepherded throughout the Posadas activity; he was full of energy and eager to show off his costume. We explained to the non-Hispanic parishioners that Posadas means “lodging” in Spanish.

Traditionally, a party is held in Mexico each night in a neighborhood home from December 16 to 24. At dusk, guests gather outside the house with the children dressed as shepherds, angels, Mary and Joseph. The procession is headed by these children and followed by the adults.

William, our Choir director, did an amazing job of organizing this event. After this “pilgrim” and Mass, all were treated to the steaming hot tamales, bunuelos (pastry) and hot chocolate. The children’s favorite part of course is the piñata. The children did an excellent job of reminding us of the preparation we need to do to welcome the birth of our Lord.
On December 15, 2018, the St. Anthony youth group had the opportunity to participate in a one-day retreat at the Richmond, Salesian facility. The day started off with a warm welcome, introductions and games that led the youth members to the theme of the retreat, family. The activities help the young better understand their Catholic faith while having fun with one another. They also took part in an adventure that became more challenging along the way, requiring them to think outside of their comfort zone, and to work together. After, the youth and leaders reflected and shared the thoughts and experiences on the activities, dreams and values for the group. The day ended with a mass summing up everything we learned together. The retreat was a day filled with lots of fun and laughter that helped the youth open up their hearts to understand one another better, and most importantly their faith. What a wonderful experience!
Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe
Celebrations around the Province

Mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe
St. John Bosco High School
Bellflower, CA

Mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe
Salesian College Preparatory
Richmond, CA

Students from Salesian High School Los Angeles and Don Bosco Tech at the procession of Our Lady of Guadalupe.
East Los Angeles

Mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe
Salesian High School Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA
On a clear, crisp Thanksgiving afternoon, more than 400 guests were served a hot meal in the gym directly below SS. Peter and Paul Church. Homeless, poor, needy, even lonely during this holiday season – all who came were served graciously with a hot plate of sliced turkey meat, mashed potato with gravy, green vegetables, cranberry sauce, and bread.

More than 90 volunteers from all walks of life, ages 7 to 80 years old, came to serve. Volunteers were divided into groups: from bilingual greeters to meal servers, engaging in genuine hospitality to behind-the-scenes kitchen prep. All present were given a talk and serving instructions by the members of the St. Vincent de Paul society before the doors opened from 2:00pm to 5:00pm. The main message: let the guests know that we were happy for them to join us and to serve each person with warm, respectful hospitality. The preparation for this Thanksgiving meal, started weeks before, from the planning and purchase of 36 turkeys, pounds of vegetables, gravy, pies, numerous utensils, bottles of juice and other condiments, all led up to this moment of grace and gratitude. Small children guided by their parents serving bread and juice, young adults helping seat incoming guests, servers sent out with hot plates followed by a choice of pumpkin or apple pie for dessert, the kitchen prep line churning out waves of full plates, and additional servers coming in to bus finished plates and prep table settings for the next guests... All who served on this day worked towards making every guest feel welcome and as comfortable as possible.

The St. Vincent de Paul chapter of SS. Peter & Paul church will do their Annual Christmas dinner on Christmas day; their monthly last Sunday of the month dinners are open to all volunteers who seek to serve the poor and the needy among us.

We would like to give our heartfelt gratitude to the leaders and members of the St. Vincent de Paul group, and all who volunteered before, during, and after the Thanksgiving dinner. Great heartfelt blessings to all of you as well, who follow the Son of Man that did not come to be served but to serve.
As promised last week, this is another healthy salad option if you are tired of holiday food. The Mediterranean Tuna Salad by Kate Sherwood from the Nutrition Action Healthletter, July/August 2017 offers a good recipe.

Here it is:

1/2 lb. small potatoes  
1/4 lb. green beans, trimmed  
2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil  
2 Tbs. mayonnaise  
1 Tbs. whole-grain mustard  
2 tsp. red wine vinegar  
1/4 tsp. kosher salt  
1 5 oz. can no-salt-added tuna, drained  
4 cups salad greens  
1 cup chopped tomatoes

1. In a medium pot, bring the potatoes and enough water to cover to a boil. Simmer until the potatoes are tender, 10-15 minutes. Add the green beans and cook until tender, 3-5 minutes.

2. Run under cold water in a colander to cool, then drain well. Cut into bite-sized pieces.

3. In a large bowl, whisk together the oil, mayonnaise, mustard, vinegar, and salt. Toss with the potatoes and green beans and the remaining ingredients.

Above amount serves 2. Per serving (3 cups): calories 410, total fat 25 g; sat fat 3.5 g, carbs 28 g, fiber 5 g, protein 19 g, sodium 550 mg.

I have a feeling that tuna can be substituted with shredded chicken or other proteins. The combination of the ingredients is a good recipe to create your own version of healthy salad.
REFLECTION

By Melissa Cedillo, Loretto Volunteers

“...I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals.”
- Luke 3:10-18

The third Sunday of Advent is often marked by the theme of faithfulness.

Specifically, in Luke’s Gospel, we are called to be faithful to God’s basic creation, the Earth. This reading begins in similar way that most prayers start, “What should we do?” or even more simply, “How can we be faithful?”

John the Baptist responds by telling people to shed themselves of excess in order for all to have what they need. While objects like coats, food, wages, and taxes help to live a dignified life, there is something significant in remembering that our bodies also desire the natural gifts of God. Towards the end of this reading, Christ is named for the first time. It is also here that the elements water and fire, and the harvest items of wheat and chaff, are introduced.

Remembering Christ as water and fire, and reading of wheat and chaff, reminds me of the power of being connected to creation. Finding God’s presence in the smell of fresh white flowers or hearing God’s humor through my housemate’s laugh. Returning to the question, “What should we do?” the answer may simply be to turn outwards - to what has been made pure.

PRAYER

Advent translates to “coming”. While we each prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, the end of the year, and the beginning of a new year, may we pray: For those who make up our own communities, that we may nourish each other.

For those who accompany us in our day-to-day lives, that we may see God’s gifts in them. For our natural Earth, that we may tend to it with love and care. For one another, that we may use our God-given gifts to lift each other up.

Focus: COMMUNITY

Most frequently, when I turn myself outwards, it is usually towards my volunteer community. My community consists of four beautiful women. For me, these women are the most organic examples of creation and kinship. I desire their support while I discern my future. I long for their companionship.

They replenish me after a long day. Each woman is unique, one offers a warm embrace every night, one fills me with joy, one teaches me compassion, and one shows me grace. They each illuminate the natural gifts God has blessed them with.

SERVICE SUGGESTION

I invite you to turn outwards. Plan to spend intentional time with your community. Acknowledge each other and affirm the natural gifts that each member holds. Ask - what parts of nature are surrounding you? How can you take better care of them? It is a simple act of being present, but it is in doing so that we can sit and enjoy creation while we wait for the coming of Christ.
DECEMBER
Salesian Missionary Intention
in the light of the Holy Father’s prayer intention

For the Salesian Family at the service of Social Communication

That the Salesians and the Salesian Family may have an evangelizing impulse and creativity in the Areopagus of Social Communication.

Today more than ever social networks, and Social Communication in general, are architects of culture. We pray that – with creativity, professionalism and intelligence – we may influence culture through the Gospel and our educative values.

This Christmas SHARE the GIFT of an AWESOME STORY

DON BOSCO
BOSCO
BOSCO
FRIEND OF THE YOUNG
OF THE YOUNG
OF THE YOUNG

MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS CENTER
6400 East Chelsea Street
Tampa, FL 33610
PHONE: (813) 625-6191 EXT 22
EMAIL: ldagrosa@mhctampa.org
AVAILABLE ONLINE AT
www.mhctampa.org
In every young person, a point of goodness is accessible and it is the primary duty of the educator to discover that sensitive cord of the heart so as to draw out the best in the young person.

- Don Bosco