Dear Salesian sisters and brothers,

I am presently in Santa Cruz, at Villa Del Mar Retreat House run by the Holy Names Sisters. The Provincial Council and I are here for a week of meetings: prayer, planning, reflection and some fraternal time together. We arrived on Sunday evening and will finish on Friday at noon. It is a beautiful setting, close to the ocean and a quiet atmosphere. The Sisters have been most gracious and hospitable. There is a group of 25 Sisters and 5 or more directors who are making a silent retreat. This also forces us to keep a somewhat reflective atmosphere, especially, at table. But, you can’t keep Salesians totally quiet. But everyone has been most patient with us.

The first two days here at Villa Maria were spent doing a Lectio Divina on next Sunday’s Scriptures, reflecting on Fr. Maria Arokiam Kanaga’s final draft presented to the province at the end of his extraordinary visitation and what that might mean to us. Today, Fr. John Itzaina led us through an evaluation of our last Provincial Chapter, its deliberations and how to make that concrete and part of our plan for the future. This afternoon, Br. Al Vu led the council through our Province Organic Plan of 2016. We are in the process of updating the Organic Plan, with its six priorities, based on the outcomes of our last provincial chapter and Fr. Arokiam’s final remarks to our province. While we worked hard this afternoon, we have yet to finish the last three of the six Priorities.

Tomorrow, Wednesday, we will tackle the last three priorities, do some reflection on an article by Gabe Huck and spend the afternoon visiting Point Lobos near Monterey, go through the 17 mile drive and see if we can visit Bishop Sylvester Ryan in Monterey. Bishop Ryan has been a very good friend of the Salesians, and he was instrumental in helping us build and start the new St. Francis Salesian College Preparatory School almost 20 years ago. Bishop Sylvester, although no longer Bishop of Monterey, has continued to be very supportive of the school and the Salesians. We will continue with our work on Thursday and Friday addressing some Province and personnel issues. We are grateful to be here and enjoy this beautiful setting and, at the same time, work on ways to help the province move into the future.

The Provincial Council has been focusing on ways to do ongoing formation. This formation, which was a key issue at the Provincial Chapter, deals with our Salesian formation, meaning, our way of doing ministry, our style of life, imitating Don Bosco and St. Francis de Sales’ kindness and family spirit. As we look at what kind of Salesian for the young today, we are constantly reminded that we must be men of prayer, convinced that God has called us for a mission, able to live fraternal life in a healthy and happy manner and not afraid to meet the young wherever they may be, in their situations, their struggles and their dreams. Dialogue, closeness (smell of the sheep as Pope Francis reminded us) and openness to where God will lead us are essential characteristics of our Salesian style today. We need to get out of our comfort zone and be available for the mission to and with the young. That is not easy, especially, if we feel we cannot leave the place of ministry where we have been, and we unable to see that the mission is given to the Salesians and the province and not to one person. This requires faith, trust and a spirit of availability.

The next few days of our provincial council “retreat” will focus on ways to...
We pray for the sick and suffering in our province, that they will be restored to full health.

Bless those who have grown old in your service and give them courage and strength in their faith.

Be with us as we discern our life’s work and guide us in the way we are called to follow in the footsteps of your Son.

We ask you this, that in everyone and in everything glory, adoration and love may be given to the Most High Lord of all things, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Fr. Joe
World Youth Day Echo 2019

By Johnny Martinez
St. Josephs Retreat Center

World Youth Day Echo was a success! Over 200 young people gathered at St. Joseph Salesian Youth Renewal Center in Rosemead for an event with a purpose. On May 4, 2019 thousands were invited to participate in sharing the Panama World Youth Day theme “I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word” Luke 1:38. We had many guest speakers including, Hector Ibarra, Rhyun Ramirez, Diana Wehbe and over 20 community organizations and ministries that gave the participants an opportunity to directly respond to God’s call in their lives.

World Youth Day Echo had witness talks, three breakout sessions with three different speakers for young adults, youth, and Spanish audiences, live music, and outdoor Mass and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. It was a time for the community in the surrounding San Gabriel Pastoral Region to gather and experience for the first time or re-experience the World Youth Day experience through the eyes of Mary’s “Fiat.” Participants were encouraged to reflect on their calling and relationship with God. Many had a powerful encounter with the Lord. One such young person was Paola Torres, a young adult leader at Santo Tomas Parish in Los Angeles. She wrote:

“My experience in World Youth Day Echo was such an amazing experience that made me reflect on all the blessings I received when I went to the World Youth Day at Panama. I had a great time at WYD Echo i enjoyed worshiping, adoration and walking with the Blessed Sacrament. I learn a lot from the witness talks, there was a lot of fear in me at first but after hearing all of the strong and amazing testimonies I learned that I needed to let go of that fear and let God’s plan begin in my life. I realized that I shouldn’t be afraid of God’s calling because he is merciful and has a special plan for each of us just like the plan that our mother Mary had. I felt that the strength of the Holy Spirit allowed me to say yes and understand that God works in mysterious ways but we must trust in him like our Mother Mary did because he knows what is best for us. This experience allowed me to take off that blindfold and see that God has been there with me and will continue to be with me as long as I continue to have faith and trust in him.”

Also, check out this video for World Youth Day Echo May 2019
https://youtu.be/OJImA7qI03o

If you are interested in San Gabriel Pastoral Region - World Youth Day Lisbon 2022
Camp Savio First Week

By Sean Wilk
Camp Savio Counselor

This summer, Camp Savio is going to be an opportunity for not only I but my fellow counselors as well, to grow both individuals and in our faith. This is my first summer doing Camp Savio, and already, I have seen many qualities from other counselors that I wish to gain over the rest of the summer. I have seen other counselors show their patience, their passion and enthusiasm, and their kindness, and I know that all counselors can learn from each other to become a better version of themselves. The Liturgy grade is always especially enthusiastic and brings others in on their enthusiasm with their chants of “Liturgy! Liturgy!”, making all of Camp Savio feel involved. These traits that others show and exhibit are the way that they provide campers with such a great summer and help themselves grow in character and faith.

Through our service with the children, Camp Savio will provide an opportunity for many counselors to become more like the religious figures we look up to and believe in. St. John Bosco believed in helping young children, and to do so, formed the Oratory, a home, school, Church, and playground, and through Camp Savio, we will provide all of these to the children. Like St. John Bosco, we will bring out the excellence in each child, and through helping them, we will help ourselves. Along with John Bosco, Jesus himself loved children and would spend time with them and bless them. He believed that they deserved kindness, and that because of their innocence, they would enter Heaven before all others. When we treat children in the ways that Jesus and St. John Bosco did, giving them our time, love, and kindness, we are able to become more faithful and faith-filled.

Our service to the kids will provide us an opportunity to form bonds and make memories that will last for years to come. Serving together is a great way to form strong and fast friendships among the counselors and seeing the happiness in the kids’ face will be the reward for serving. Already, I have made new friends at Camp Savio that I would have not met otherwise, and that is definitely one of my favorite parts of serving so far. I and other counselors will be able to fondly look back on what we did for the children, and in return, what they did for us.
I love what was described in the independent.co.UK website about certain facts of sugar. I hope you would enjoy reading the reason why many of us love sugary food.

What happens to your body when you overindulge your sweet tooth?

Sugar is essential for the human body as it powers the cells that keep us alive. However, eating too much of it can also have a negative effect on our health. Foods with added sugar that does not occur naturally contain empty calories, meaning that they have no other benefit than to provide energy. If we eat more sugar than our energy levels require, then our bodies have to find something else to do with it, creating a whole host of problems. Excessive sugar consumption is one of the leading causes of obesity, heart disease and diabetes.

Sugar on the brain
As humans, we are programmed to love sugar. Our primate ancestors evolved to seek out sweet foods for their high-energy content to increase their chance of survival when food was scarce. Nowadays food is much more readily available, yet we still can’t get enough of the sweet stuff.

The reason for this is all in the brain. When we eat sugar, the brain releases dopamine and serotonin, the hormones that boost your mood, which then stimulate the nucleus accumbens – the area of the brain associated with reward. This is a similar process that leads to drug addiction, which is why we get those sugar cravings. Regular sugar consumption can also inhibit dopamine transporters, which can lead to you needing to eat even more sugar to get the same pleasure reward as before. In addition, fructose, which is used to sweeten many foods and drinks, doesn’t suppress hunger hormones like glucose does, meaning your body is unable to tell when you’ve eaten enough.

Where is sugar hiding?
Sugar comes in many forms but they typically have names ending in –ose. As well as glucose and fructose naturally found in fruit, vegetables and honey, lactose and galactose can be found in milk and dairy products, and maltose in barley. These natural sugars are fine in moderation as they also come with other nutritional benefits. For example, a piece of fruit will also contain fibre, which helps limit the amount of fructose the body absorbs.

Added sugar, used to improve the taste and textures of foods and drinks, is the type that is considered unhealthy. This usually comes in the form of sucrose, or as a sugar substitute such as sucralose, saccharin, aspartame or high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS). HFCS is artificially produced from corn and used in many processed foods and fizzy drinks. To find out how much sugar is in your food, check the ‘carbohydrates - of which sugars’ value on the label.

Your homework assignment from the Care Ministry this week:

As suggested above, check the carbohydrates and sugar content of your favorite food.

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

Unless you really study the sugar content of what goes into your mouth, it is very easy to consume more than you need. I hope that you find the pictures helpful when you familiarize yourself with your favorite food and recognize how much sugar there is. It is more enjoyable to your palate and your health if you make the right choice.
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