

Canada and Eastern USA



Salesian Family Snippets



News of the Salesian Family Near and Far

▶ **MAMMA MARGARET'S BASKET**

At the end of a year, we should all have a basket like that.

OUR LADY WILL BE QUITE PLEASED

Access information to join a novena for the Immaculate Conception.

THE RECTOR MAJOR'S CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Don Ángel chose a large detail of a painting of Archangel Gabriel by Giuseppe Rollini.





In This Issue



LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

Mamma Margaret's Basket 03



IN, WITH, AND FOR THE CHURCH

Our Lady Will Be Quite Pleased 05
Immaculate Conception Novena 2023

Preorder a Set of Puzzles 06
from Museo Casa Don Bosco

The Rector Major's Christmas Greetings 06
with Rollini's Angel

The Golden Thread 07
Purpose of the 2023 Salesian Family Festival

Salesian Pioneers of North America 11
Br. John Vulpinari, SDB

IN THE SALESIAN FAMILY KNOW

We are a Family 12
Meeting at the St. Dominic Savio Cooperator Center

IMPORTANT DATES



Nov. 29 - Dec. 7: *Immaculate Conception Novena*

Dec. 5: *Bl. Philip Rinaldi, SDB*

Dec. 8: *Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
182nd anniversary of Don Bosco's meeting
with Bartholomew Garelli*

Dec. 12: *Our Lady of Guadalupe*

Dec. 16-24: *Christmas Novena*

Dec. 25: *Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord
Christmas Day*

Dec. 31: *Feast of the Holy Family*



**Save the Date for the upcoming
Salesian Family Spirituality Days,
which will take place from Jan. 18-21, 2024!**

Visit

<https://donboscosalesianportal.org/sf-snippets-archives/>

to read and download this issue and previous editions.

Front and back cover photos and photos featured on the "In This Issue" page courtesy of Canva Pro



Strenna 2024 poster that includes Mamma Margaret with her basket alongside Our Lady.
Courtesy of Agenzia Info Salesiana (ANS)

Mamma Margaret's Basket

At the end of a year, we all have a basket of memories in our souls. It contains what we have experienced, a year that was rich and full of pleasant memories, but also of unexpected events, and a year in which there was no shortage of surprises.

THE MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR CARDINAL ÁNGEL FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME, SDB

Dear friends of Don Bosco and his charism,

At the close of this year, 2023, it seemed interesting to me to use the basket that Mamma Margaret always carries on her arm as a symbol. Even in the new strenna poster, her hallmark is the basket hanging from her arm. We are all used to seeing Mamma Margaret like this. Without the basket, the kerchief on her head, and the dress of a poor peasant woman, it wouldn't seem to be her.

Her basket was made of wicker woven with great care. In it, she had carried baby clothes for her grandchildren, fragrant freshly-baked loaves of bread, and linen scented with cleanliness.

But on November 3, 1846, as Don Bosco recounts in the *Memoirs of the Oratory*, when he and his mother went down from Becchi to Turin to gather the abandoned young men of the city, Mamma Margaret had filled it with her wedding trousseau, carefully folded, with some bouquets of lavender placed in the middle. At the bottom, well hidden under the cloth lining, she hid her little treasure: a little velvet package containing two rings and a gold pendant. With these few possessions, they

were able to meet the basic needs of the Oratory. Mamma Margaret had a heart as big as all the hills of Asti; so the linen began to disappear, turning into shirts and underwear for the boys. The fate of the wedding dress is curious, as it became the first altar cloth for the Pinardi Chapel and then a bedsheet for a cholera patient. Still, the basket wasn't empty, for it contained the scent of all the good and beautiful things of her life.

The Treasure Chest of Happy Memories

At the end of a year, we should all have a basket like that, hanging on our mind and heart—a treasure trove of happy memories. We should fill it with the wonder of the dance of life that has quickly passed away: the people who have done good to us; the grace-filled moments; the encounters that have given us breath and courage; the certainties; the hopes; and undergirding it all, the precious gold of God's presence.

In my basket, I found so many things for which to thank the Lord of Life, our good God and Father. And certainly, as happens in everyone's life, even in your life, dear reader, not everything experienced in a year produces joy. There

are also sorrows, hardships, demands, and losses, but when all these things are lived with faith, they are illuminated in a precious way.

- In my basket, I find many efforts—both my own and the efforts of those who assist me in animating and governing the Congregation – which have served to give life, so much life. We've been able to help so many people, so many children, and so many youths throughout the Salesian world, thus encouraging my confreres and the Salesian Family to continue along the journey of Salesian fidelity. My basket is full of many donations from a number of people from all over the world – in 135 nations and in the thousands of works of the entire worldwide Salesian Family.
- In my basket this year, there's the visit of Don Bosco's successor to the juvenile detention center (the old Generala Prison that Don Bosco visited with Fr. Cafasso), from which I returned home with a heavy heart, filled with pain for having been in the midst of those young people (who I hope will soon overcome this situation), but with the joy of knowing that they will make it. The greeting of that young man who asked me, "When are you coming back?" is etched in my memory. I will be back soon.
- In my basket, there is the joy of the many travels made during the year—once again to the six continents, given that I went back to Australia. I could write pages and pages about these trips. I will mention only my

visit to Peru, which I made twice in February: once to the plateau of Huancayo, with its cold and its hills and with the encounter with more than a thousand young people, at an altitude of 8,200 feet. Then, to Piura, and the immense heat of the "City of Eternal Heat" (as they themselves like to say), where I found a devotion to Mary Help of Christians that moved me.

- My basket contains the joy of having been in Viedma, Argentina, five months after the canonization of our Salesian coadjutor brother, St. Artemides Zatti, the joy of retracing the paths he traveled and of living where he lived and made holiness a reality in everyday life.
- And this year, the basket, deep in my heart, contains the most profound experience that any human being can have: that of losing one's mother, especially when one's father has already gone to Heaven. You really feel that the "umbilical cord" that sustained you, not only until you were brought into the world, but throughout your life as well, has been cut definitively. Although I certainly experienced this as a loss, yet I also experienced it, with the Lord's grace, as full of meaning and hope and with immense gratitude to the Lord of Life for a long and beautiful life in the case of both my father and my mother. How can we not thank the Lord for this?
- My basket this year contains the immense joy of the precious days spent in Lisbon on the occasion of

World Youth Day. More than a million young people gave a precious witness of humanity and of humanism and of the ability to live in harmony, friendship, and peace while being very diverse, different from one another, for they came from every part of the world. What a great lesson they teach us.

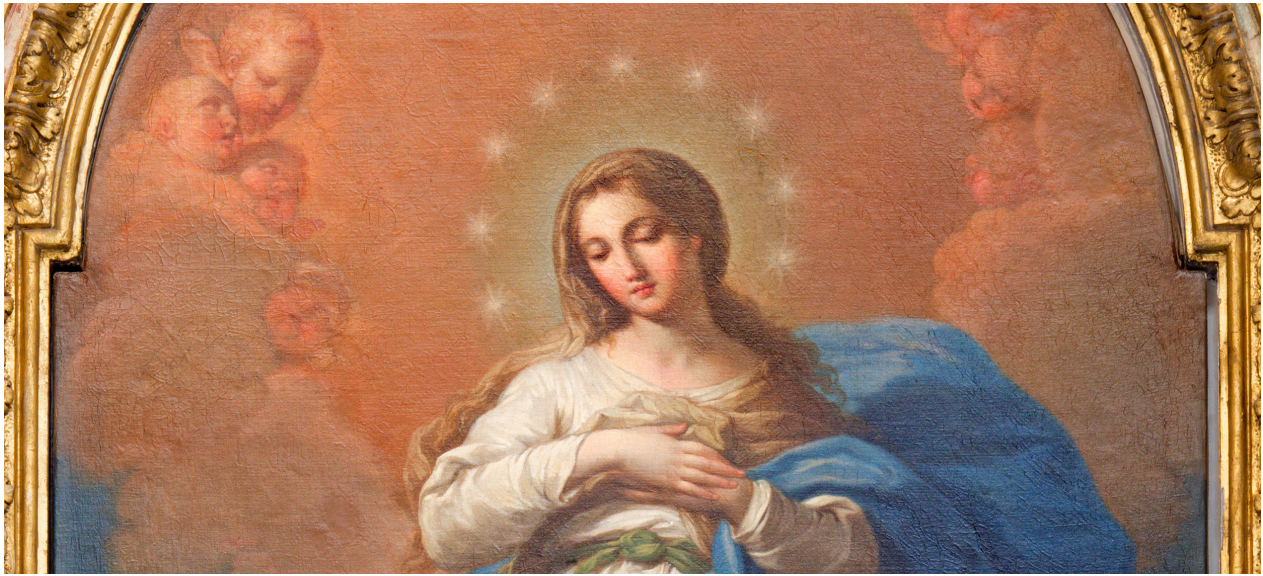
- Finally, my basket this year contains a profound act of faith and obedience. No doubt, it was with faith that the Holy Father appointed me cardinal of Holy Roman Church. And, indeed, it is with faith and the certainty that our God accompanies each one of us along our life in the unique way that only He knows, that I accepted this plan and this obedience. Just as one hears when receiving the cardinal's ring, certainly it was accepted with gratitude and with the promise of fidelity and loyalty to the Vicar of Christ. Only through faith can this be lived worthily.



As you can see, my friends, my basket is full. I am sure that this is also the case in each one of your lives. This is God's great gift of life.

I wish you blessings in this month. I hope that, while waiting for the coming of Jesus Christ, you will continue to work as a Salesian Family to ensure that our world be purified of hatred and discord and filled with the Christian spirit, so that all of us can always live in peace with one another.

In, With, and For the Church



A painting of the Immaculate Conception by Francesco Preciado de La Vega.
Photo courtesy of Canva Pro

Our Lady Will Be Quite Pleased Immaculate Conception Novena 2023

GATHERED BY SR. DENISE SICKINGER, FMA,
AND MS. JULIA ST. CLAIR, SUE PROVINCE COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

This year's Immaculate Conception Novena began on Wednesday, November 29, and will last through Thursday, December 7. All SDBs have been given this [print resource](#) to use in their communities. It contains passages from Scripture from the life of Mary and excerpts from Fr. John Ayers that encourage reflection on the preventive system. All excerpts are taken from the section "Immaculate Preventive System" in the pamphlet *Don Bosco Finds Mary in the Church* by John Ayers, SDB.

Additionally, this year's theme on the SDBs' province social media is based on the Magnificat. Each day through Thursday, December 7, a story will go up on [Salesians of Don Bosco, Canada and Eastern USA](#) (Facebook) and [@salesiansue](#) (Instagram) with a line from the Magnificat and some prayers. They will also be reposted to the stories on [Salesian Youth Ministry](#) (Facebook) and [@sym_bosco](#) (Instagram).

Last, the Salesian Sisters also have a novena on their province Instagram. Please visit [@salesiansisters](#) each day for a reflection on the qualities of Mary, our Immaculate Mother.

"... But how can we honor Mary these days so as to merit Her protection? I shall not insist on frequent reception of the sacraments. You already know that Don Bosco has nothing more at heart than this. But I will suggest two particular things to each of you in Mary's honor.

First, put your whole heart into this novena; second, prepare a bouquet of flowers for Her feast day. How? By picking a flower each day. But where, when no flowers are blooming in this cold winter? From the garden of your hearts. What sort of flowers? Some little act of virtue to be practiced each day in honor of Mary Immaculate.



Let each one take this to heart, so that on the dawn of this great feast there will be as many bouquets as boys, and each bouquet will have a flower for every day of this novena. You may be sure that Our Lady will be quite pleased with your gift."

- St. John Bosco, [The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco](#),
Volume VI, page 170



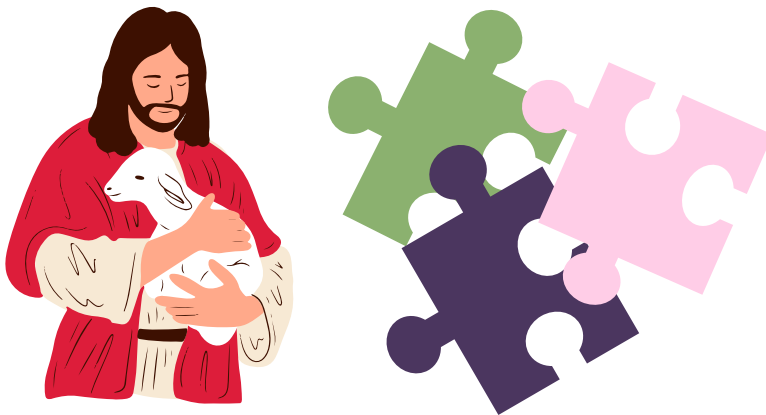
Three of the four art pieces that serve as the visual focus in Museo Casa Don Bosco's youth ministry room. / Screenshot courtesy of flyer from Museo Casa Don Bosco

Preorder a Set of Puzzles from Museo Casa Don Bosco

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON
WWW.SALESIANS.ORG, 11/30/2023

(Turin, Italy – November 30) – Museo Casa Don Bosco in Valdocco has created a new interactive youth ministry resource for the bicentenary of Don Bosco's dream of age nine.

Each of the four art pieces that serve as the visual focus in Museo Casa Don Bosco's youth ministry room has been transformed into a puzzle. This serves as the perfect interactive activity to celebrate the bicentenary of Don Bosco's dream of age nine in the full context of Don Bosco's life. Once assembled, these puzzles become a permanent youth ministry resource for any school, parish, oratory, community, and/or work.



Please see [this flyer](#), which offers full details for ordering a puzzle set. If interested, email info@museocasadonbosco.it. Be sure to follow the instructions laid out in the flyer when placing an inquiry and/or order.



Archangel Gabriel as depicted by the painter Giuseppe Rollini (1842-1909)
Photo courtesy of Agenzia Info Salesiana (ANS)

The Rector Major's Christmas Greetings with Rollini's Angel

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON
WWW.INFOANS.ORG, 11/29/2023

(ANS – Rome) – For the Christmas greetings 2023 and New Year 2024 by Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime, Rector Major of the Salesians, a large detail of a painting by the painter Giuseppe Rollini (1842-1909) depicting the Archangel Gabriel was chosen.

The idea was put forward by the coordinator of the Casa Don Bosco Museum in Valdocco, Turin, Dr. Ana Martín García, who explains: "The Archangel Gabriel painting currently exhibited in the permanent collection at the Casa Don Bosco Museum, has been attributed in recent studies to the school of artist Giuseppe Rollini (1842-1904), a former student of the Oratory. This artist lived at the Oratory of St Francis de Sales in Valdocco around 1860, while attending painting courses at the Albertina Academy in Turin. His work, of great technical skill, offers a great versatility of themes and includes historical, sacred, portrait, and landscape painting. Having trained with Enrico Gamba and Andrea Gastaldi, he collaborated with Alessandro Vacca on the decoration of the Medieval Village of Valentino (National Exhibition of Turin, 1884) and worked on the Cathedral in Pinerolo, the Church of the Royal Park in Turin and the Sanctuary in Cussanio, Fossano."

From a more purely Salesian point of view, Dr. Martín García adds that "Rollini had a father and a patron in Don Bosco. The direct contact with the saint left an important mark on his professional career, as evidenced by his artistic production. Rollini did wall paintings and large altarpieces in churches built from scratch under the direction of Don Bosco, such as the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, the Church of St John the Evangelist, also in Turin, and the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Rome. As a portrait artist, he left an important testimony for the history of the Salesian Congregation, immortalising the face of Don Bosco (1880 and 1888), Mamma Margaret (1885), that Fr. Vittorio Alasonatti (1899) as well as Fr. Michael Rua (1905)."

The image chosen for the greetings thus also becomes an exhortation to all its recipients to know and visit the Casa Don Bosco Museum, custodian of the most precious finds in Salesian history.

Completing the [greetings in the inner pages](#) are a message taken from the Pope's homily delivered to the new Cardinals and to the College of Cardinals in the Eucharist on October 4, 2023, in which the Holy Father invites the Church to take on the same blessing gaze of the Saviour ("We belong to Him and—let us remember—we exist only to bring Him into the world" is the conclusion of the quotation); and the best wishes of the 10th Successor of Don Bosco, accompanied by the hope for "the end of the wars in the world").



Finally, this year's greeting card of the Rector Major is also characterized by the [presence on the title page of a double coat of arms](#): in addition to the usual one of the Salesian Congregation, there is also that of Cardinal Fernández Artime.



Statue of Don Bosco and his boys outside of Don Bosco Prep in Ramsey, NJ.
Photo by Mrs. Jill Conroy, Salesian Cooperator

The Golden Thread Purpose of the 2023 Salesian Family Festival

BY SR. DENISE SICKINGER, FMA

For a while now, some people have been saying that the Salesian *Family* Festival was a confused mess of talks for different audiences and with too many purposes. In addition, a number of times, the objection was raised that this Festival would have no interest for the SDB, FMA, and Cooperators since "we do youth ministry." "Family ministry is not in our job description" because Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello did not do that. So why hold this Festival? We shall endeavor to answer:

1.) It was the answer of the Salesian Family in our province to the call from a number of our recent Pontiffs, from Paul VI to Francis, to foster Christian family life and values, from within our Salesian tradition. In each of these pontificates, great emphasis was placed on the vital importance of fostering Christian family life and values, as is evidenced by the writings, actions, and entities established by these Holy Fathers, and the increased level each time of authority of the writing and the body established to carry this mission forward:

1968: Paul VI promulgated *Humanae Vitae*.

1973: Paul VI established the "Committee on the Family."

1981: John Paul II issued a motu proprio *Familia a Deo Instituta*, establishing the "Pontifical Council for the

Family," a body of the Roman Curia. This Council fostered "the pastoral care of families and protect[ed] their rights and dignity in the Church and in civil society, so that they might ever be more able to fulfill their duties."

1994: The first World Meeting of Families was organized and run by this Council.

2016: Pope Francis promulgated his apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, and established the **Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life**, shifting the responsibilities of both the Council for the Laity and the one cited above to this new entity. Its mission is "the promotion of the life and apostolate of the lay faithful, for the pastoral care of the family and its mission according to God's plan and for the protection and support of human life."

2.) The Festival was no haphazard juxtaposition of unrelated elements that pertained only to married or engaged couples, parents, and blood-related children and family members. From the moment of the inception of the idea, it was an organic whole (albeit with many pieces – but pieces as that of a mosaic that, when assembled, form a beautiful image) that was intended to "aid, celebrate, inform, engage, and sanctify" families, and the world through them and through the Salesian Family. For this reason, many groups already engaged in family ministry and advocacy were invited to share with us what they do, with the express hope that we would find ways to network with them to help our families and to promote their mission. But we came not just to receive but to give: since Don Bosco's way of



The theme for this year's Salesian Family Festival
Courtesy of Sr. Denise Sickinger, FMA

living family life, the Family Spirit, is completely grounded in the Preventive System, it was natural that this would be the Salesian Family's contribution to the discussion. Although this, in itself, is sufficient reason for having held the Festival, we still felt the need to explain it in terms of youth ministry. Therefore,

3.) Anything affecting our young people—how can family not?—calls out to us to "do something about it." Indeed, Don Bosco told his first Salesians: "Do as Don Bosco would do; not as Don Bosco did." If Don Bosco himself were alive today, he would be promoting devotion to the Holy Family as the model for all families. He would stress devotion to St. Joseph in a time when men are acting in any way but the way St. Joseph would as a man, husband, and father. Without the slightest doubt, he would take head-on all the errors that seek to destroy the values of life, family, and Faith and would openly speak against them. He would recognize that the Devil is behind this attempt to destroy

the family and its values. With all this in mind, we recalled from within our Family that Pope Benedict XVI made the direct statement to the members of the SDB's GC XXVI that the Salesians needed to become involved in family ministry. Most certainly, Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello would have been first in line to second the call of a pope. Later, in 2016, Don Chavez followed the Holy Father's lead and gave us the 2017 Strenna: "We Are Family: Every Home a School of Life and Love." Living the Preventive System is our way to live as the Holy Family did and to minister to families to help them be "domestic churches." This is the golden thread that can tie together family ministry with youth ministry and which linked together all the parts of the weekend. Even beyond that, this optic allows us to understand, embrace, describe, and explain the purpose of the Festival and its connection to every person's daily life, whether as laity, clergy, Religious, married or single, young or old.

4.) In order to be true to the vision of the *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the*

Salesian Family of Don Bosco, we effected the Festival in a synodal manner. We formed a Family of laity and Religious who observed, prayed, reflected, shared, planned, formed, animated, and worked together in the mission to bring salvation to the world through this Festival.

In summary, it was our attempt to address, in a Salesian way, a great need in our society: the evangelization of our young, families, and the world in the areas of life, love, Sacramental marriage, and family in the context of the *domus ecclesiae*. From the very start (the vision began to develop about seven years ago in 2016, with the promulgation of *Amoris Laetitia*), the goal of making pilgrimages to World Meeting of Families in Dublin (2018) and Rome (2022) was always to bring home with us what we learned so as to help the Salesian Family move into family ministry. Finally, the thought of creating our own “mini-world-meeting-of-families”—the Salesian Family Festival—took shape. The needed encouragement came in the decision of the Salesian Family Provincial Council to support the pilgrimage to Italy, and its antecedent study of *Amoris Laetitia*, for this purpose and to promote gatherings around this mission on the local level in 2020, the regional level in 2021, and the province level in 2022. The pandemic interrupted that timeframe.

So, we moved forward. By the happy plan of Divine Providence, three realities intersected which confirmed us in this task: On December 8, 2020, Pope Francis proclaimed a year dedicated to St. Joseph; on December 27th he announced the “Year of the Family” to mark the 5th Anniversary of the promulgation of *Amoris Laetitia*. He stated: “As of now, I invite everyone to take part in the initiatives that will be promoted during the Year and that will be coordinated by the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life. Let us entrust this journey, with families all over the world, to the Holy Family of Nazareth, in particular to St. Joseph, the devoted spouse and father.” Then, in December 2021, Don Ángel called on the laity, in a particular way, to become “Yeast in the Human Family,” with *Strenna 2022*; third, in 2023, a strong interest from outside the Family to know and understand Don Bosco’s Preventive System surfaced. Then, as the day drew near we heard that the topic of *Strenna 2024* will be, not surprisingly, John Bosco’s Dream at Age Nine.



The Salesian Family before the Statue of Our Lady at Don Bosco Prep on the evening of Friday, October 6, 2023, as we were in Procession with the Blessed Sacrament. Photo by a Salesian Family member from the SUO Province

Here you have it: everything merges into one complete whole. What else is the Dream of Age Nine but Don Bosco’s introduction to living the Preventive System and helping others live it? It was this “system” that created the family spirit at Valdocco. Because of it, we could easily call the Hospice of St. Francis de Sales a *domus ecclesiae*, a domestic church. This “system” became the golden thread running through the entire weekend. On Friday, at the Oratory Day, the focus was on creating healthy, because holy, relationship. On Friday evening and Saturday, the focus was on the realities attacking our children, their innocence, life, and family and how to illumine them in His Light. On Sunday, the focus was on how to live as a *domus ecclesiae*, a domestic church, by becoming involved in advocacy, ministry, and charity to families and people in need, and by sharing the beauty of our Faith with those struggling to believe. Sunday evening into Monday was the chance for the Salesian Family to reflect on how we could bring the good begun back to our home places and move forward as leaven in the world where it is most needed today—right in our families. As the family goes; so goes society.

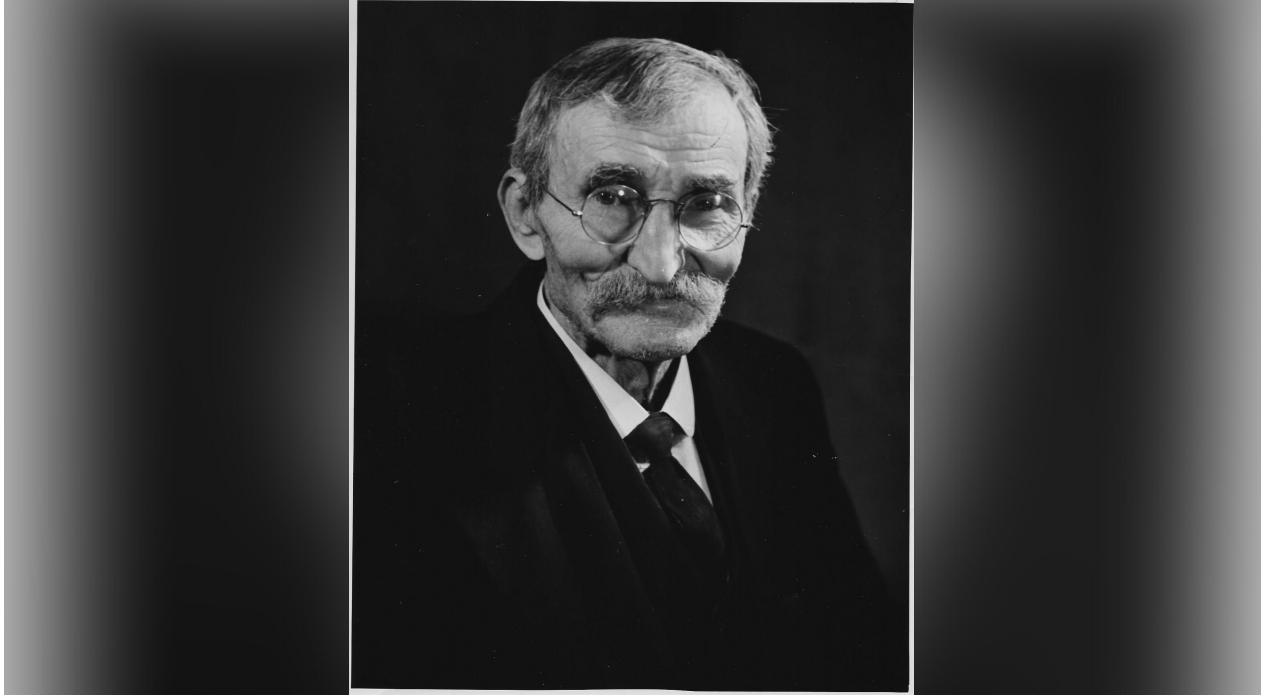


The chart on the following page lists some of the mosaic pieces that made up the Festival.

THE GOLDEN THREAD

"All the activities - everything done at the Oratory - had one purpose: to get the boys to make good Confessions." - Cagliero

	REASON OUT OF DARKNESS <small>(Friday & Saturday)</small>	RELIGION HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT <small>(Friday & Saturday)</small>	LOVING-KINDNESS THE JOY OF LOVE <small>(Sunday & Monday)</small>
THE DREAM AT NINE YEARS OF AGE	Boys blaspheming, fighting, using foul language and becoming wild animals "Not that way, John" - Jesus	Wild animals turned into innocent lambs "I will give you a Teacher without whom all human wisdom is mere folly" - Jesus	John: humble, devout, gentle, steadfast, teaching Sheep turn into Shepherds (later versions of the Dream)
PREVENTIVE SYSTEM - AS LIVED AT VALDOCCO, CREATING THERE THE DOMUS ECCLESIAE	Boys want to be good - there is a point accessible to good in everyone If they only had good shepherds, someone to teach/catechize them Educate to the beauty of virtue and the ugliness of vice: Sin leads to suffering and Hell; Virtue to joy and to Heaven - choose the good God is our Loving, Provident Father: let us not offend Him by sinning Be on the alert to recognize those things and people who will harm the body, mind, heart, soul, and spirit; keep them away from the boys and cast them out immediately once discovered The Good Night calls the boys to reflect on the happenings of the day and the times and their meaning for eternity Involvement of the laity in catechizing and instructing the boys in subjects they needed	Consistent Evangelization and Catechesis - increased during Advent and Lent Visuals that raise the mind to God and to Heaven: marble plaques with quotes from Scripture and the Church Fathers Shun bad companions and all bad places and literature Listen to the voice of your Guardian Angel Be devoted to Mary: Daily recitation of the holy rosary Imitate the virtues of St. Joseph, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, and the saintly young men who have gone before you/were your companions: Comollo, Savio... Live a Sacramental life: Attendance at daily Mass/ Adherence to the Magisterium and loyalty to the Holy Father "Upright citizens because good Christians"	Run, jump, shout, play: Do anything you want, just don't sin It is easy to be a Saint: fulfill your responsibilities, keep joyful, do good to others Family Spirit lived in joy and charity and fostered by the presence of Mamma Margaret Providing for work, physical, intellectual, and emotional needs "Do you want to be my friend? Help me to save your soul." "Make yourself loved and not feared" Enjoy what the boys enjoy and they will come to enjoy what you enjoy: Games, activities, plays, music "La parolina all'orecchio": Correct privately; do not humiliate; remind gently, firmly, and often of the rules; the Strenna at the beginning of a new year Become an apostle among your friends as the Good Shepherd among His sheep
THE SALESIAN FAMILY FESTIVAL	The talks/workshops that pointed out and explained the dangers attacking the young and families: the ideologies, events, and actions by the governmental, societal, and educational entities that deny the Truths of life, love, relationships, marriage, & family, and seek to destroy the Faith The core teams of Cooperators, Past Pupils, FMA, and SDB, East and West, working in synodality to plan, organize, and run the Festival & for 2024 to develop on-going formation	The talks/workshops that taught of love & relationships with God, self, spouse, friends, family, neighbor, God's Mercy and the True Presence, as taught by the Magisterium of our Holy Church; Immacul�e's talk on forgiveness Vendors offering items for sale that help create the domus ecclesiae Confession, Adoration, Holy Spouses Rosary, Holy Mass with the Bishops of Paterson, Newark, and New York Dr. Howard's promotion of the cause to canonize Fulton Sheen	Living the Lord's Day as a family: Holy Mass, meal, fun, outreach The call & the means to take on family ministry: Salesian Matrix: Family Version; family ministry & advocacy groups and diocesan outreach ministries to the developmentally-disabled and the poor: to aid, celebrate, inform, engage, and sanctify families Salesian Family leadership & Sean Bryan calling all, especially the laity, to be Salesians in mission in new ways, together, as equals - according to the Salesian Family Charter & Global Compact on Education



*Br. John Vulpinari's portrait (Newton, late 1940s)
Photo courtesy of Salesian Provincial Archives*

Salesian Pioneers of North America **Br. John Vulpinari, SDB**

BY FR. MIKE MENDEL, SDB

This is the last of the monthly series on some of the pioneers of the Salesian work in the U.S., marking the 125th anniversary of the SUE Province.

Decades ago, someone at Don Bosco College Seminary in Newton, NJ—it may have been my master of novices—opined that at Newton the novices look holy but aren't; the clerics (seminarians) don't look holy, and they aren't; the coadjutors brothers look holy, and they are. During his 86 years, Br. John Vulpinari, SDB, had a reputation for holiness. For a time he was among Newton's "holy trinity" of coadjutors (my term) alongside Br. Vincent Nassetta (1889-1966) and Br. Frank Gambaro (1887-1987).

John Vulpinari was born at Verrucchio di Forlì in Italy's Romagna region on March 5, 1867. The 5'8" youth with dark hair and gray eyes, weighing 130 pounds, entered the Salesian house of St. John the Evangelist in Turin in November 1891 and then the novitiate at Foglizzo in 1893. He made perpetual profession at San Benigno on September 24, 1894. It seems he'd been a farmer in his youth, and that's how he described himself at

Foglizzo from 1894 to 1900. He was transferred briefly to Canelli, still tilling the soil. These early years of Salesian life indelibly shaped Br. Vulpinari's vocation, marked by faith and dedication to his responsibilities. He had a keen interest in vocations, and on one noteworthy visit to his family he returned with a dozen new aspirants.

In 1901 Fr. Rua chose him to go with four other confreres to start an agricultural school in Jamaica. It proved to be a very challenging undertaking, lacking adequate financial means, pupils willing to do the necessary work, and good land. The Salesians had difficulty adapting to the climate, and multiple natural disasters added to their woes. A hurricane was followed by a flood and then an earthquake.

The Salesians finally gave up on Jamaica in 1908. Br. Vulpinari came briefly to New York and was sent to the school at Hawthorne. He returned to Italy in 1909, assigned to the novitiate in Lombriasco. He hadn't abandoned his missionary vocation, however. He moved definitively to the U.S. in 1910, when he sailed from Genoa aboard the



Coadjutor brothers with Fr. Ernest Giovannini at the chapel, Mt. Don Bosco, June 12, 1945.
 Row 1 seated: Brs. Emmanuel Alicino, Gerard Poirier, John Zito. Kneeling: Br. Michael Frazette.
 Row 2 standing: Brs. Vincent Nassetta, Frank Gambaro, Fiore DaRoit, Charles Todel, Rudy Bertagnoli.
 Row 3 standing: Brs. David Tierney, Dominic Casiraghi; Fr. Giovannini; Brs. John Vulpinari, Peter Costa.
 Photo courtesy of Salesian Provincial Archives

Hamburg and arrived in New York on November 19. He spent the next 33 years at Transfiguration Parish on Mott Street, serving as cook, sacristan, and factotum. His apostolate was diligent work, charity, and a spirit of faith and prayer, according to his obituary letter by Fr. Joseph Stella. Observers marked him as a holy brother.

In September 1943, the provincial, Fr. Eneas Tozzi, moved Bro. Vulpinari to Don Bosco College in Newton “to help in and around the house.” Fr. Stella, his director at Newton, wrote: “There for ten years he edified everyone with his love for work, with his spirit of prayer, with his faithful observance even of the smallest rule. Although his age prevented him from doing a great deal, yet year after year he was seen after meals, dressed in work clothes, going to the farm, to the garden, or into the fields. The love and diligence with which he cared for the animals made one think of the Saint of Assisi.”



He was also frequently at prayer in chapel, even addressing Jesus aloud when he thought he was alone. His favorite book was Don Bosco’s *Il Giovane Provveduto (The Companion of Youth)*. He never complained, even in his last, painful illness. Assisted by Br. Nassetta, this “holy son of Don Bosco” passed away on October 25, 1953, at 2:15 a.m. His life had been a “continual hymn of work, humility, and prayer,” said Fr. Stella.



In the Salesian Family Know



Provincial Fr. Dominic Tran (left, standing) and Vice-Provincial Fr. Franco Pinto (left, seated) with Hernando, FL, Salesian Family
 Photo by Ms. Melody Candiloro, Cooperator Aspirant

We are a Family Meeting at the St. Dominic Savio Cooperator Center

BY MS. MELODY CANDILORO,
 COOPERATOR ASPIRANT

Monday, November 6, was a very special meeting for us here at the St. Dominic Savio Salesian Cooperator Center in Hernando, FL. It was a meet and greet for our new Provincial Fr. Dominic Tran, SDB, and Vice-Provincial Fr. Franco Pinto, SDB. We were so blessed to have them both visit our center, but even more than that, they are so supportive of our apostolate of fostering children.

St. Benedict Catholic Church in Crystal River has been a great help to us by placing our ad promoting foster care in their bulletin. We're counting on other churches to do the same. Pat Sobel, Coordinator of the Salesian Cooperator Center in Hernando, continues to work tirelessly with Leslie Hosmer from Kids Central in promoting the desperate need for foster parents. Mass at the center was presided by Fr. Dominic and Fr. Franco and was followed by an induction of a new Cooperator, Anna Grosso. She grew up in the Salesian Oratory of Santa Dorotea in Rome, frequenting it from the ages of eight to fifteen. The other Cooperators also renewed their Promise.



Hernando, FL, Salesian Family at the gathering after Mass.
Photo by Ms. Melody Candiloro, Cooperator Aspirant

The evening concluded with a social gathering of 27 attendees, to include Salesian Cooperators, Aspirants, Volunteers, guests, and of course Don Bosco's Children's Home kids, as we enjoyed the delicious food and goodies prepared by Pat and the Cooperators.

It was certainly a productive and joyous evening for all! As Fr. Franco said: "We are a family; we are Salesians!"



**Let Us Rise Up
Through God's Love**



**Maria Auxilium Christianorum,
ora pro nobis!**



**"God never gives someone a gift they
are not capable of receiving."**



- Pope Francis

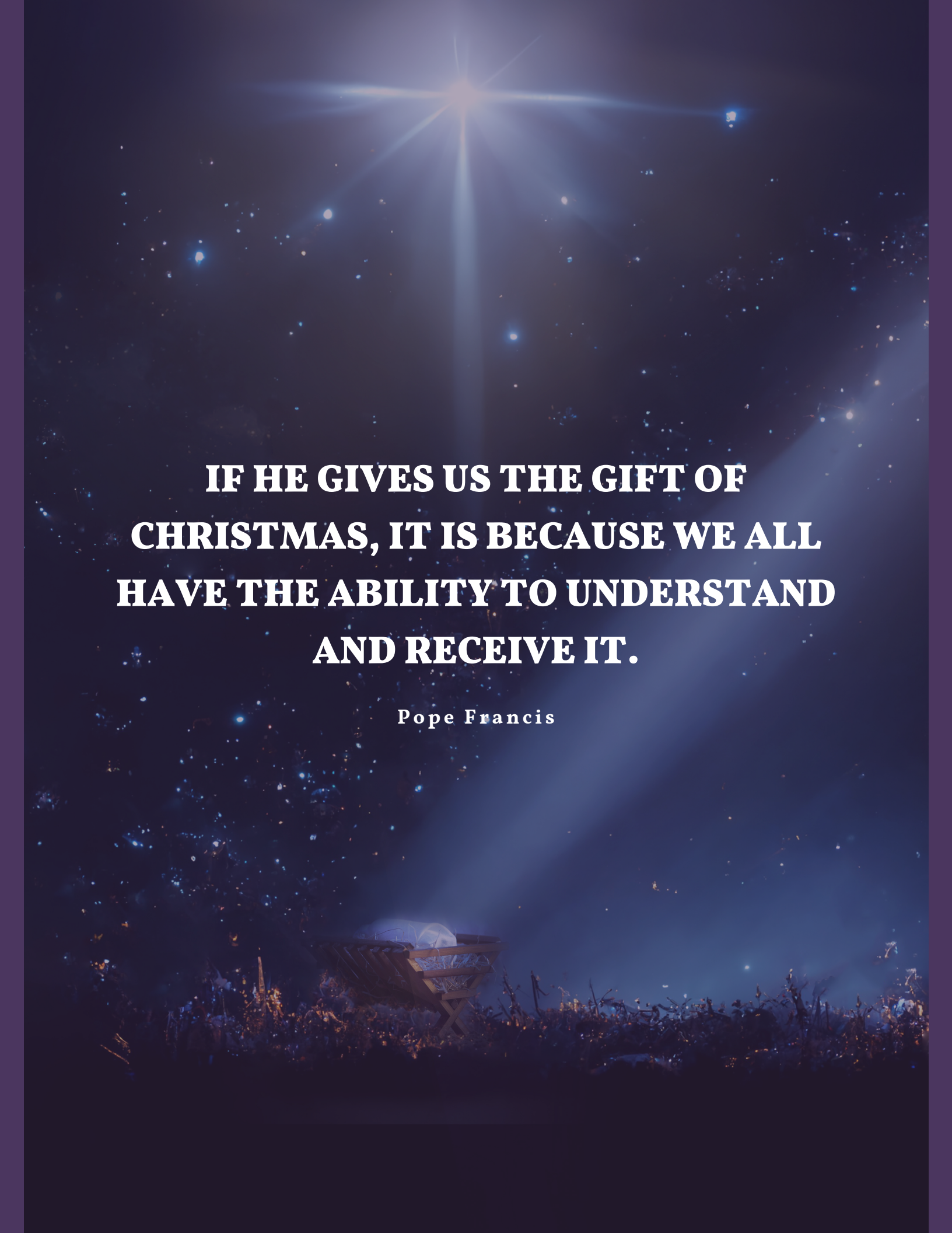


Our email address is:

contact@donboscosalesianportal.org



Copyright © 2023 Salesian Family of Canada and Eastern USA. All rights reserved.

A night sky filled with stars and a bright, glowing star at the top center. Below the star, a manger scene is visible, showing a wooden manger with a baby wrapped in a white cloth, surrounded by straw and hay. The scene is illuminated by a soft, blue light.

**IF HE GIVES US THE GIFT OF
CHRISTMAS, IT IS BECAUSE WE ALL
HAVE THE ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
AND RECEIVE IT.**

Pope Francis