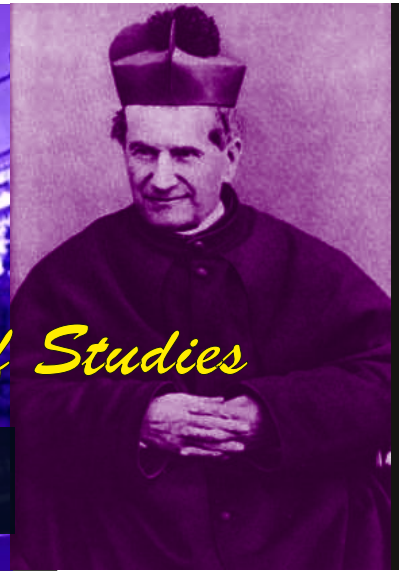


PAX:

Newsletter of the Salesian House of Studies

FEBRUARY 2011



DEAR FRIENDS,

Since the last edition of the Newsletter appeared in mid December 2010 we have celebrated Christmas and welcomed the New Year 2011.

Here at the Ratisbonne the first two weeks of every January are given over to the mid year examination session. This year was no exception. However within three of four days of the exams ending virtually all the members of our Community boarded the coach for the journey northwards via the valley of the Jordan River to Galilee and the retreat centre on the crest of the Mount of Beatitudes. This must be one of the most beautiful and inspiring locations in the world for a retreat centre. Looking due south from the grounds of the retreat centre there is a magnificent view over the whole of the Sea or Lake of Galilee. Stretched out immediately below the sanctuary of the Beatitudes are the northern shore of the Lake, the sanctuaries at Tabgha and the remains of Capernaum, the lakeside town which Jesus made his home after leaving Nazareth and beginning his public ministry.

This year's retreat was led by Fr Eunan McDonnell, an Irish Salesian whose speciality is the spirituality of St Francis de Sales. His insights into the spiritual wisdom of St Francis, our Patron, were much appreciated. For the five full days of the retreat we were blessed with warm sunshine from dawn to dusk. And the rain and grey skies to which we awoke on the last morning of the retreat had disappeared by lunch time. The small community of Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the lay staff who help run the retreat centre made us very welcome.

Sadly just a month before our retreat, on Christmas Eve, three of the community's Sisters had been killed in a tragic car crash on their way to midnight Mass in Bethlehem. They were much in our prayers during our time of retreat.

Fr Tom Dunne, the Provincial of the US East Coast and Canadian Province, arrived for a short visit at end of January and was able to preside at St. John Bosco's feast day Mass. A good number of priests and Sisters from local religious communities joined us for this celebration.

After lunch on Friday 11th February most of our Community made their way to the Salesian School, Bethlehem for the annual Don Bosco Inter-Seminary Gathering which the Bethlehem SDB community generously agreed to host this year since the Ratisbonne does not have the facilities to do so. This was the last of three such gathering organised each academic year. The gatherings date back almost fifteen years to 1997 when in preparation for the Third Millennium staff and students from the theological centres in and around Jerusalem met for five days of study and reflection. On this occasion seminarians and staff from the Franciscan Seminary at St Saviour's in the Old City, the Latin Patriarchate Seminary in Beit Jala, the White Fathers and the Betharram Fathers' Novitiate took part in a very enjoyable and successful gathering.

As always let me close this brief introduction to the Newsletter by assuring you – our relatives, friends and benefactors - of your special place in our prayers. Please don't forget to keep the Salesian Community here in Jerusalem in your own prayers.

Very sincerely,
Francis Preston SDB

Meet the Students

My name is Dennis Manwa Bisonga, I am a Kenyan, from AFE Province. I first met a Salesian in 1998 in my home parish who had come there for a vocation promotion. I joined the Salesians in 2002 and finished my Novitiate 2005. I did my practical training in Don Bosco Seminary-Mafinga in Tanzania (Aspirantate). I love sports, running and making new friends. For the period that I have stayed here in Holy Land, I have enjoyed meeting charming confreres and people of diverse cultures and nationalities, who have made a great impact in my life. But above all, the fact that Jesus lived in this very land, gives full meaning of my being

here and indeed it is something worthy to re-live His reality in my life as a Christian and in the young people whom I will encounter in life as a Salesian.



Martyrs of St. Sabbas Monastery

BY BR PAUL TURAY

"These are the people who have come safely through the great persecution they washed their robes and made them white with the blood of the lamb..."
(Rev. 7:14).

Christianity has faced persecution and suffering from time immemorial. This can be seen in the lives of the early monks who lived at St. Sabbas Monastery (Mar Saba, Bethlehem). According to history, they were attacked by brutal Muslim Arabs over the centuries. They exclaimed, "We have fled from the world into this wilderness for the sake of our love for Christ and it would be shameful if we fled from the wilderness out of fear of men. If we are slain here, we will be slain because of our love for Christ for Whose cause we came to live here." In this light many were massacred by Arabs with arrows and died as martyrs for the sake of Christ whom they loved with their whole being. The words of St. Paul still speak to us today as contemporary followers of Christ, "For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). For us Christians it is good to keep in mind that in choosing Jesus Christ we are also choosing the cross (suffering) but in faith. Assurance is given that one day we will be with him who is our Lord and Master in the

place where he has prepared for us. Finally, for Christians today who are facing persecution for the sake of Christ the words of St. Paul should be an encouragement "... that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). The martyrs of St. Sabbas are a clear example for us today. In one of St. Sabbas' chapels the skulls of the martyrs remain as a proof for their faith. If we suffer today for Christ we need to bear in mind that we are not the first and we won't be the last. But hope is only sealed in our lord and master Jesus Christ whom we are to love and serve sincerely during our earthly life.



Annual Retreat

JANUARY 20-26

MOUNT OF BEATITUDES, GALILEE

From January 20-26 the Salesian community and Jane Frances de Chantel. of Ratisbonne made their annual retreat. This year the retreat was held at the Franciscan Sisters on the Mount of Beatitudes retreat centre in Galilee. The weather and the environment were near perfect the entire week.

The theme of the daily conferences was the Spirituality of the Heart in St. Francis de Sales. The retreat preacher of these conferences was Fr. Eunan McDonnell SDB. The themes he discussed covered a range of ideas in St. Francis. Below are some of the daily themes that were covered during the week:

- 1) The fundamental connection between God's Providence in nature and in the Incarnation.
- 2) The most prized virtues for St. Francis: gentleness, meekness and humility.
- 3) The importance of spiritual friendship in the writings of Francis - especially between him

- 4) Some of the principles Francis' asceticism: not seeking after unusual penances and that there will always remain some imperfection in us - but do not despair.
- 5) The great trust that Francis put into inspirations from God - those movements of the will and affection to do the will of God.

Outside of the conferences many of the brothers received great edification from visits to nearby Tabgha, where Jesus worked the miracle of the loaves and where he asked Peter three times, "Do you love me?" and to Capharnam where much of Christ's preaching time was spent.

Two of the especially memorable moments of the retreat were the renewal of vows of Br. Isley

Queiroz Do Nascimento and the celebration of Fr. Victor Cabanas' 25th anniversary of profession.



Feast of Don Bosco

In the days leading up to the feast of Don Bosco the Salesian community of Ratisbonne celebrated a triduum of solemn Vespers. The day itself (31st) was one with much rain. Perhaps a bad sign in other contexts, but a real blessing here in Israel and reminiscent of Don Bosco's canonization day. The community celebrated a solemnized Mass presided over by visiting East US/Canada Provincial Fr. Tom Dunne. Fr. Francis Preston preached the homily. In attendance at Mass were Christians and members of Religious Orders from around Jerusalem.

Following the Mass light refreshments were served to all the guests.

The community had a festive lunch in the refectory, which was beautifully decorated by some members of the Philippine apostolate. Some musical items were presented following the meal.

In the evening, to bring the day to a proper close in honour of Don Bosco, the students hosted an evening soiree. songs, skits, a mime act and lots of laughter. A fitting celebration for the Father of Youth.

Experience of A Deacon

BY DEACON PAOLO CECCON

Since becoming a deacon, my best experience has been the administration of a baptism to a child. It was the 30th October, and we performed the rite in the chapel of our house. The child's name was Ni O Moshe and he was almost one year old. There were about twenty people to assist in the ceremony. I was very nervous! I tried to prepare in all the details of the rite, by reading many times the ritual, by praying for this child for a couple of weeks before his acceptance in the Church, and by confession, since we are called to be channels of the grace of God and the cleaner the channel is, the less we block the grace which is transmitted. Indeed, though the efficacy of a sacrament does not depend from the sanctity of the minister but by the holiness of God – which is infinite and absolute – it is also good that the minister be as sinless as he can be, in perfect communion with God who is acting through him. In the beginning, the child was quite "suspicious" of this new figure, dressed in unusual clothes, who was moving around him and who at a certain moment woke him up by pouring cold water on his head. However little by little the child realized that he was the focus of attention and that the people around

were there to celebrate with him this special moment of his life. For me it was a really joyful experience, and now I feel a kind of "paternity" towards this child and his new life of faith, and I am aware that through my ministry the Church has put her seal on Niño Moshe's becoming God's child and an official member of the Church. I am of course aware that his journey of faith of him is just at the beginning and therefore I have the responsibility but also the joy of constantly keeping him and his family in my prayer.



Music: A New Song is Ready

BY BR GIAMPAOLO NICASTRO

Don Bosco used to say that an oratory without music is like a body without soul. Because of this he promoted music as one of the main activities, in order to make come out all the most beautiful feelings present, but sometimes hidden, in the youngsters. Looking at our group of children I cannot but confirm that Don Bosco was definitely right. The children of speak of are the boys and girls who come to Ratisbonne for the weekly oratory and catechism. Playing and singing they are expressing what they have inside, they are discovering they can do something they never did before. Musicians in order to play well must be friends, need to share a deep intimacy. So that guys who were just learning to play guitar, now are becoming a band. They understood that playing together is different from playing alone. Each one has his own place, his own instrument,

his own part, but the band is only one, like one is the melody. A new song is ready... Enjoy!

