I am happy to be writing this article to share part of the experience of our XXIII General Chapter. I would love to share all of it, but I’m lucky if the rest of my life will be time enough to share all the wealth that I was privileged to experience during this favored time of our Institute, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. To begin, we all realized the providence, special sign and call to be living this Chapter during the “Year of Consecrated Life”, at the time of the special Synod of Bishops on “The Pastoral Challenges of the Family”, and all of this during the Bicentennial of St. John Bosco’s birth. In addition to these three hallmarks, it is a sensational thrill to be living, praying, studying and sharing throughout these two and a half months on the holy ground of our Founders, St. John Bosco and St. Mary Mazzarello, and surrounded by the antiquity, and history of the holiness of our Church.

First and foremost, the Chapter for me was an experience of world communion and involvement on the part of the entire Institute. Each of us moved effortlessly from one part of the world to the other in the Chapter Hall. It didn’t matter where you were from. England, Japan and Oceania connected and shared just as easily as the China and Czech Republics, United States and Africa. How vast and how small the world can be at the same time! How apt to have as the title of the Chapter Document, “Broaden Your Vision”, indicating the deep sense of responsibility each of us felt for not only our part of the world but for the realities of others who we influence and touch by the choices we make on a local level.

The strongest sense of all was the unparalleled experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was tangibly and forcefully felt by every Sister throughout the entire Chapter. We experienced the depth, power, daring and light that can be ours when complete trust is surrendered to this loving God that...
impels, strengthens, inspires and leads us. In the Spirit we became deeply aware that we are all called and sent to be missionaries.

We were reminded that the sublime identity of the missionary dynamism of our Institute is in the fact that, “All of our houses in the world are under one roof, with corridors connecting these rooms and with goods and Sisters moving about from room to room as the needs require.” The Spirit engendered TRUST and undying HOPE in our hearts with ever deeper realizations and experiences of the strength of the WORD. These gifts intensified when we reflected upon our mission of teaching and entrusting His WORD to YOUTH. We are to be, “Missionaries of Joy and Hope with the Young”.

The Gospel and icon chosen by the Chapter to illustrate the theme and call of this historic and momentous General Chapter XXIII, was the story of Emmaus. The icon has a unique, three part representation of the disciples of Emmaus as a family. In the first part, there is a mother, father and child on a journey joined by Jesus.

In the second part, they are enveloped by the warmth and light of His WORD and the breaking of the BREAD. In the third part, you see them taking this bread for their journey to which they have been called and sent, with the ever present challenge of discerning their choices of how best to meet the needs of the growing babe in their arms.

Like the disciples of Emmaus, may our lives be transformed through deep prayer, sound study, courageous and trustful sharing. May the vision we dream together be marked by the sign of the Spirit which is joy and hope in spite of weakness and fatigue. May we never lose sight that He is always there for us, with a ready WORD and the BREAD of His nourishing SELF that fills and accompanies us, urging us on to go out to the near and far reaches of the world of youth . . .with the young and for the young. Together, with the educating community, may we truly BROADEN our vision, for we are missionary disciples of the Gospel!

**Written by Sr. Rosann Ruiz, F.M.A.**
On the First Sunday of Advent, November 30, 2014, I had the privilege to attend the opening mass for The Year for Consecrated Life 2015 celebrated by the Archbishop of San Antonio, Very Rev. Gustavo Garcia-Siller at the Cathedral of San Fernando. Many men and women religious arrived eager to be a part of such a meaningful occasion. A mariachi group greeted everyone with music and song. Our hearts and souls were lifted up to the Lord through their praises.

The homily was instructional and very encouraging.

In the words of Pope Francis, the Archbishop reminded us that “Consecrated persons are a sign of God in the different areas of life. They are leaven for the growth of a more just and fraternal society, they are the prophecy of sharing with the least and the poor.

He went on to say: “Consecrated life is at the very heart of the Church as a decisive element for her mission, since it ‘manifests the inner nature of the Christian calling’ and the striving of the whole Church as Bride towards union with her one Spouse”. From the encyclical (Vita Consecrata 3)

Then enthusiastically, the Archbishop asked us, “What is the theme of this year, the Year of Consecrated Life?” The congregation answered softly

Causing the Archbishop to raise his arms and proclaim, “Wake the World up! The congregation then awoke and chanted loudly together: “Wake the World up! Wake the World up!”. Yes, we must wake up the world and make God known to All. God’s love must be shown through the consecrated life. Be witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living!” (Pope Francis)

Written by Sr. Rosa Hoang, F.M.A.

Sr. Rosa Hoang, F.M.A. and Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller
“It has been a grace filled journey with an abundance of experiences and treasured moments. The consecrated life is a constant invitation to grow in my daily life and the way I live relationships with those I encounter. It is a challenge to live and love radically for the sake of Christ.”
~ Sr. Alaina Zachmann, F.M.A.

“The journey that I am living as a Consecrated woman each day can be described as a daily journey of Love and Holiness. It is a life that witnesses God’s Mercy and Joy. It is a life of embracing God’s Love and Fidelity through serving, and allowing others (Sisters and the young) to journey with. It is a journey to live and to share the gift of Life with others, who have the same desire to serve God and humanity. Finally, it is a life of discovering our true self through prayer, living, and receiving loving care from one another. I do feel loved and blessed to be who I am.”
~ Sr. Bernadette Mota, F.M.A.

“This journey of becoming a consecrated Religious has certainly not been an easy one. There have been so many struggles that have come my way. But in the end, it’s all worth it because I am living my life for God and no one else.”
~ Sr. Jaden Tran, F.M.A.

“In response to Christ’s call to consecrated life, I continuously and totally surrender my heart to His divine love so that “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). It is an immense joy to be a Salesian Sister and I pray that my authenticity of life encourages many more young people to respond to His invitation.”
~ Sr. Bernadette Mota, F.M.A.

“I have always been a very strong willed and stubborn person so when I first heard God’s call to religious life, I fought it with all my might! But God was much stronger than I was, and after several years of running away from God, he won. My short time as a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians has been very fulfilling and I have much peace and joy knowing I am where God wants me to be. I am very excited about this Year of Consecrated Life and look forward to the many opportunities that God will present us to "wake up the world!”
~ Sr. Sydney Moss, F.M.A.
Our new missioners arrived enthusiastic and ready to go door to door on a two day venture, announcing the glad tidings of Bible Camp to come. Visions of large groups of children attending danced in our heads. God seemed to have a different plan. Eleven children attended receiving God’s love, undivided attention from the missioners, and very personal experiences. God’s will can baffle, even when our projections are noble.

When asked why they came, camper responses ranged from, “It gave me something to do.” to “I wanted to have fun and learn about God.” Goals accomplished! Kirsten, Ashley, Angela, and Sarah, hats off to you! Love freely given was gladly received.

We look forward to returning to the Pan American Apartments in San Antonio, TX., next year to discover what the good Lord has in store then.

Written by Sr. Theresa Jones, F.M.A.

**Reflections of Volunteers on Their Formation Service Camp Experience:**

“Before starting camp I worried about communication because of my poor English. When I met the children I realized they understood, as I felt their love. I will never forget their smiles. Even though we are different ages and cultures, we are one in God.”

Sarah Hyang Shin Lee
Rwanda, Land of a Thousand Hills, is now my new home since December 2014 when I transferred from Nairobi, Kenya to this tiny country of 11 million people. Since our Province is made up of Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda, I’m still working in my own Province which consists of 68 Sisters in 12 communities: 9 in Kenya, one in Tanzania and two in Rwanda, one in Gisenyi and the other in Kigali, the Capital.

I first had the opportunity to visit Rwanda in 2006 and in 2008 for a short time when I attended a meeting and did some substitute teaching. However, now I’m experiencing the life and culture here more deeply as each community in Kigali where they took over the management of a home for working girls coming to live in town from the villages. At that time the Sisters belonged to the French-speaking Congolese Province.

Some years later when the house in Rulindo closed, they opened another one in Kamonyi which closed when genocide began. The community left Kigali for the same reason in 1994, but reopened it three years later. It is now a thriving primary school for more than 900 children. In 1999 Rwanda became part of the AFE Province because of the political situation between the two countries.

In 2003 the second community opened in Gisenyi. The three Sisters were warmly welcomed by the parish priest who was a Salesian past pupil and was one of those who pushed to have the Sisters there.

**Gisenyi**
My new home is in Gisenyi which borders Goma, DRC (Democratic Republic of the Congo, once known as Zaire) where there has often been tension between the two countries. Goma is also one of the the places where thousands fled for safety during the 1994 Genocide. They remained there for years, only returning to Rwanda when they felt it was secure. Last year marked the 20th anniversary of the 1994 Genocide when more than 800,000 Tutis and moderate Hutus were massacred within 100 days. Since then remarkable development has taken place at every level especially in the area of reconciliation, nation building and peace, values that were
Virginia Bickford is a Salesian Sister from California who has been a missionary in East Africa since 1984. Working 23 years in Kenya and 7 in Tanzania, she is now stationed in Gisenyi, Rwanda.

...and can proceed to the University if eligible. Their courses are intense and include: Front Office, Restaurant, Housekeeping, Kitchen, Entrepreneurship, Accounting, 4 Languages – English, French, Swahili, and Kinyarwanda, Computer and a few others. When starting the school, the Sisters chose this option because Gisenyi is a resort town situated on Lake Kivu with opportunities for employment in the future. The first group that finished in 2012 were the top in the nation!

The Sisters are also involved with the youth in the nearby parish through groups of Animators, VIDES missioners, holiday camps, the weekly oratory, and other activities. The VIDES missioners from the States through Sr. Gloria Mar’s program and from other places have been a big asset to our community and works over the years.

Welcome to Rwanda, a beautiful land and beautiful people!

Written by Sr. Virginia Bickford, F.M.A.
The Christmas Boutique this year was a wonderful experience. There is always plenty of work, before, during, and after the event itself. However, this year we felt that many people cooperated in making it a success! It would be difficult to name all those who had a part in it. Suffice it to say that all entities: Past-Pupils, Salesian Cooperators, Volunteers, Friends, Parents, ADMA Members, Devotees of Don Bosco, and Benefactors united as SALESIAN FAMILY working for the success of this project which is the main fund raiser for the Sisters’ Retirement Home. We certainly experienced the truth of the saying “Unity makes Strength.” (En la unión está la fuerza).

In a special way we thank GOD for His guiding hand and protection. We also thank the many generous people who sent their different donations and contributions. We work all year to prepare for this event, and we were just putting it away without realizing how much we really had. Thank God we ended up with plenty of items for the 3 days.

Again, we thank all of you wholeheartedly for your help, your support, your cooperation and your donations. We ask Our Lord, Our Lady, and St. Joseph to repay you abundantly and send you many blessings (By the way, we’ve already started preparing for 2015!!)

Thank you to all the volunteers that helped make this event such a success!

Our Development Office set up outdoors to do their own fundraiser on day 1 of Boutique. The day turned out to be wonderful with great weather and many of our shoppers went out to enjoy the sausage taco sale! Day 1 is always the busiest, but also an opportunity to get the best buys as items do go quickly! See you all in December!

Written by Sr. Guadalupe Medina, F.M.A. and Teri Grimaldo, Development Assistant

Sr. Angelita Guzman came out to support the Development Office as they did some fundraising of their own.
By choosing to purchase a Single or Perpetual Mass Card, you are giving a truly unique gift of prayer to your loved ones, living or deceased!

An individual who is enrolled in our Perpetual Mass group will share perpetually in the merits of the Eucharistic Liturgies offered by the Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco. The enrollee will also share perpetually in all the prayers, sacrifices and good works of the Sisters. Those enrolled while living, after death, continue to share in this rich treasury of spiritual benefits. A Single Mass Card recipient will receive a special Mass offered in their name. Family and loved ones are able to attend these Masses by contacting the Provincial House Development Office for arrangements. You may also order either of the Mass Cards through our website, www.salesiansisterswest.org, and click on the Prayer tab. If you have any questions, please contact the Development Office at (210) 431-4999 or email sswdevelopment@sbcglobal.net.

**The Gift of Prayer**

*The Salesian Sisters’ Perpetual Mass Enrollment*

*The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco)*

prayerfully remember those, both living and deceased, who have been enrolled in their Perpetual Mass Program.

Those who are enrolled while living will, after death, continue to share in the prayers, sacrifices and good works of the Sisters.

**Perpetual Mass Card**

$25 donation

**Individual Mass Card**

$15 donation

**A Gift of Loving Prayer**

A special Mass will be offered for

at the Salesian Sisters Provincial House Chapel, San Antonio, Texas

Requested by: [Signature]

Date
This year the Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco will be participating in The Big Give S.A., a 24-hour day of giving that will take place from midnight to midnight on May 5, 2015. We encourage you to participate, spread the word to your family and friends, and be a part of one of the largest on-line giving trends by donating to your favorite non-profit. Your participation is crucial and we are asking that you share this information now. We will be posting more information and updates as we get closer to the date.

The purpose of this community-wide giving challenge is to increase public awareness of the impact local nonprofits make in addressing our community’s social challenges, bring nonprofits and donors together to expand online giving, connect people to the causes that move them the most, and, of course, make giving FUN!

On May 5th, visit www.thebiggivesa.org to make a donation to the Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco Western Province. All donations on May 5th will give us the opportunity to earn matching funds and prize incentives. This means that your gift has the capacity to leverage additional funding. You will be able to give by phone, tablet, or computer. The minimum donation is only $10, but there is no limit to what you can donate.

The Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco's mission is to provide Christian education and formation to the young, especially the poor, and women at risk; joyfully proclaim the Good News to all cultures; and promote the regeneration of a more just and human society. Many have devoted their lives to this mission. Won't you consider giving back?

Thank you and stay tuned for more information leading up to the date. For more information, call the Development Office at (210) 431-4999 or email Esmeralda Castillo, Director of Development at sswdevelopment@sbcglobal.net.

Contact Update—Please fill out and return to Development Office, 6019 Buena Vista, SAT, 78237, email to sswdevelopment@sbcglobal.net, or phone in to (210) 431-4999

What forms of social media do you use? Please provide your handles so we can stay in touch. Our social media handles are included (FMA) so that you may follow us.

☐ Facebook FMA (WesternProvince) www.facebook.com/DevelopmentDpt

☐ Twitter FMA (@salesianswest) www.twitter.com/salesianswest

☐ Instagram

☐ Tumblr

☐ Vine

☐ LinkedIn

We would like to know a little more about who our readers are. Tell us a little bit about yourself.

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<th>17–29</th>
<th>30–49</th>
<th>50+</th>
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Connections Page 10
May 2, 2015  

**2nd Annual Ladies’ Tea Party**— We will once again be honoring the month of Mary and celebrating Mothers, Daughters, Grandmothers and all of the special women in our lives with our Annual Ladies’ Tea Party. The event will be held on the beautiful grounds of the Provincial House on May 2, 2015, from 11 a.m. -1:30 p.m. Cost will be $20/ea., or $150/table of 8. If you would like to sponsor a Salesian Sister to attend, cost is $20/ea. Seats and tables will sell out quickly, so call now to make your reservation. (210) 431-4999 or email sswdevelopment@sbcglobal.net

May 5, 2015  

**The Big Give S.A.**— You are encouraged to participate in this 24-hour day of on-line giving by making your gift to The Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco Western Province. You will need to log on to www.thebiggivesa.org anytime from midnight to midnight on May 5th to make a minimum donation of $10. Non-profit organizations in Bexar and surrounding counties will be participating, but we ask that you kindly designate your gift to us on this particular day. We ask that you complete the form on page 10 and return to us as soon as possible. The requested information will be crucial to the success we as an organization have with this very unique on-line giving opportunity.

October 12, 2015  

**12th Annual Children’s Education Golf Tournament**— Join us in raising funds for our Friends of Don Bosco Education Fund! All proceeds go towards scholarships and tuition assistance to 1st—8th grade students attending our 8 Salesian Schools throughout our Western Province. Next year’s event will be at the Dominion Country Club with a 1 p.m. shotgun start. Cost will be $150 per player, or $600 per foursome. Jr. Teams (ages 10—16) are $100 per player and $400 per foursome.

Various sponsorship opportunities available:
- Platinum Sponsor- $4000 (Includes 4 players, lunch/dinner, goodie bags, hole signage, and much more)
- Awards Dinner Sponsor– $3000 (Includes 4 players, lunch/dinner, goodie bags, hole signage, dinner sign, etc.)
- Hospitality Sponsor- $2000 (Includes 4 players, lunch/dinner, goodie bags, hole signage, networking opp., etc.)
- Lunch Sponsor– $1500 (Includes 4 players, lunch/dinner, goodie bags, hole signage, lunch sign, etc.)
- Small Business Package- $1000 (Includes 4 players, lunch/dinner, goodie bags, hole signage, etc.)
- Helicopter Golf Ball Drop Sponsor- $400 (Company signage on all advertising materials, special sign at event)

Call today to reserve your spot and/or sponsorship! (210) 431-4999 or email sswdevelopment@sbcglobal.net
Have you moved recently?

We would like to keep in touch with you so that you may continue to receive our Connections newsletter and any other important updates or information about upcoming endeavors the Sisters have planned. Please provide us with your current information below and kindly mail it to our office.

Name

Correct Address


Email

Phone

CONNECTIONS is specially designed for our Salesian Family and Friends! If you would like to have someone added to our mailing list, please contact us so they can also begin enjoying CONNECTIONS!

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You shop. Amazon gives.

- Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco Western Province whenever you shop on AmazonSmile.

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www.twitter.com/salesianswest

www.facebook.com/DevelopmentDpt