



Dear Members and friends of the Family of Don Bosco,

Warm greetings to each one as with this joint letter we officially launch the year-long bicentenary celebrations of Don Bosco's birth in our part of the Salesian world.

In the press conference held in Rome earlier this year, our Congregation Leaders, Mother Yvonne and Don Chávez, expressed great hopes for this significant anniversary in the history of our Salesian Family, the culmination of three years of intense preparation. For them the bicentenary year is not a nostalgic looking back at the past nor a purely parochial event but an opportunity to renew again our commitment to young people as they face the challenges of life. It is a fresh call to the entire Salesian Family to engage in our mission with and for young people.

Our prayer and hope for this special year is captured and expressed in a beautiful and inclusive way in the Strenna or motto offered to the Salesian world this year. It is an open invitation to all of us who share or identify with the Salesian spirit: **"Draw on the spiritual experience of Don Bosco in order to walk in holiness according to our specific vocation"**. We celebrate and rejoice in the diversity of gifts within the Salesian Family, to be used for the good of and with young people.

This year will be marked by different events at local and national level which will enable us who are part of the family to be actively involved and through our participation to:

1. Return to our roots and the inspiration of our Salesian charism which is uniquely ours but given for the wider world;
2. Respond to the invitation and challenge to renew energies, purpose and passion for our mission with and for the young, especially for those most vulnerable;
3. Look to the future with hope.

We are thankful to the Bicentenary team for their work of reflection and preparation, following on from the pilgrimage of the relic of Don Bosco last year. The team will present a calendar of events and forward materials and educational resources for your use in early September. We invite you to be involved and encourage others to do the same.

At one level, two hundred years is only a drop in the ocean of the history of human endeavour and humanity's search for meaning, but now is our time. We are called to be active agents of a new consciousness and a new history, of new endeavours, as part of God's ever unfolding engagement with people and creation. May the "Man of Dreams" who remains ever young, inspire and guide us during this year to realise the dream of God for the young: **"What I want is your happiness now and in eternity"**.

May Our Lady Help of Christians, who pointed out to Don Bosco the task and the way, remain with us as our teacher and guide.

It is our hope that this Bicentenary year will be a Year of Grace as communities and groups come together in our local places on 16 August 2014 to begin the worldwide year of celebration of the 200th anniversary of Don Bosco's birth. Enjoy this wonderful year and be open to the newness that God wants to gift all of us with.

Happy Bicentenary Year!

Handwritten signature of Sr Mary Doran in blue ink.

Sr Mary Doran FMA, *Provincial*.

Handwritten signature of Fr Michael Casey in blue ink.

Fr Michael Casey SDB, *Provincial*.

16 August 2014.