
SILVER JUBILEE OF DON BOSCO BOYS' TOWN

14th November 2009 was an auspicious day in the history of Don Bosco Boys' Town. The community celebrated the silver jubilee of its existence. Don Bosco Boys' Town is situated on a six acre plot of land donated by the late Maurice Cardinal Otunga a saintly person with the sole idea of service in mind. The land was given to the Salesians of Don Bosco in 1984 and it was the intention of the late Cardinal that the Salesians set up this project of Don Bosco Boys' Town at Karen, a posh area of the city of Nairobi to make the rich of the area to be more concerned about the plight of the poor and the needy.

The then Provincial delegate for East Africa appointed the late Fr. Sean Mc Ferran an Irish Salesian with several years of missionary experience in India to his credit and the late Bro. Cherian Palathumkal another highly experienced principal of technical school as the pioneers of this project. The target of the project was (and is still) to train the boys from financially weak background, mainly from the slums of Nairobi . The pioneers worked hard to get the needed fund from agencies such as Cebemo, Comide, JDW, European Union, Adenauer Foundation, Misereor and individual benefactors. Finally the foundation stone was blessed by the late Cardinal Otunga on 31st January 1985 and officially opened by Cardinal Otunga himself on 31st January 1989. Even during the years of construction the students were housed in a shed and given training.

When Fr. Mc Ferran left for Ireland in 1987, Fr. Tony D' Souza became the director and the number of trainees and trades increased. Many Salesians, staff and students have come and gone. Close to 4000 young men have received training in trades such as Carpentry, Masonry, Plumbing, Electrical, Tailoring, Turning, Fitting, Welding and Motor Vehicle Mechanics and other allied trades.

Speaking on the occasion, Rev. Fr. P.L. Joseph SDB (the Provincial of Eastern Africa) who presided over the Holy Eucharist stressed the importance of gratitude and later on to the gathering he spoke about the coincidence of this silver jubilee within the 150 anniversary of the founding of the congregation. He said that Don Bosco would be happy to see how Don Bosco Boys' Town is helping young people like what he did in Turin of 19th century.

On the occasion of the jubilee, the silver jubilee edition of the magazine which was designed by Fr. K.D. Tom (the principal of Boys' Town) and his team was released. A video on Don Bosco Boys' Town a programme of 25 minutes prepared by Fr. Sebastian Koladiyil SDB, the Social communication delegate too was released on the occasion.

On the same day certificate was given to 96 students who were completing their course in the different trades. For the first time there was a student for art and design to receive the certificate of merit. Mr. Augustine Njeru, a former member of parliament was the chief guest for the certificate giving ceremony. Mr. Njeru spoke about the four organizations/movements which made a mark on the Kenyan society. He placed Don Bosco institution along with the Scout Movement (stated by Beden Powel who is buried in Kenya), Starehe Boys (founded by Mr. Griffins) who give secondary education to the bright

boys from the financially weak background and Undugu Society (founded by the late Fr. Arnold Grol for rehabilitating the street children of Kenya). Mr. Raila Odinga, the Prime Minister of Kenya sent a message of congratulation and urged the Salesians to give more importance to entrepreneurial and business skills in the curricula. Fr. Babu Augustine SDB, the director of Don Bosco Boys' Town not only welcomed the guests but also expressed the gratitude of the Salesians to all the funding agencies and great individual benefactors. He was careful not to mention any Salesian who worked here in particular for the fear of leaving out anyone. However, he mentioned the contribution of the pioneers, all the Provincials and the Rectors Major: Rev. Fr. Vigano, Rev. Fr. Vecchi and Rev. Fr. Pascual Chavez for their concern and support. Rev. Fr. Chavez too had sent his message and in it he urged the Salesians to work unconditionally and unselfishly for the young people like Don Bosco.

Several people who are associated with Don Bosco Boys' Town sent in their messages of congratulation and offered their apologies for their unavailability. Fr. Tony D' Souza, one of the key persons at the early stage of this project could not make it as he had some other important commitment till 13th November. However he sent a message for the school magazine and assured of his spiritual presence. Fr. I. Raj from Mozambique too sent his best wishes and expressed his apology as he sustained an injury which kept him to his bed. He spoke about his nostalgic feeling for Boys' Town where he worked for seven years. It was during his time that the girls too began to receive training at Boys' Town. However, all the other former directors, Fr. Hubert Pinto, Fr. Devasia Manathara and Fr. John Marciniak were present. Fr. Abel Njeru, Fr. Simon Asira, Bro. Georgio Conte, Fr. Santey K., Fr. P.D. George, Fr. George Kocholickal, Fr. Simon Nellikunnel, Fr. Peter Mutinga and Bro. Evans Onyiego who worked here in the past were present for the celebration. Fr. Paul Luseno SDB a former student of Boys' Town too concelebrated at the Holy Eucharist.

Close to 2500 people were fed at the end of the well prepared entertainment. Fr. K.D. Tom who moved to Boys' Town from DBYES as the principal of Boys' Town was the coordinator of the jubilee celebration. He held several meetings with his committee and the celebration was really excellent due to great cooperation he received from everyone. In the last two months the community really worked and especially the last two weeks it was a beehive of activity. It was wonderful to see boys and girls practically competing to volunteer for work often lasting late into the night. A special word of "Thanks: to all the neighbouring communities for the great support. The Two longest-serving staff Mr. Girardo Mukoko and Mr. Peter Wanjohi were felicitated and awarded during the occasion.

Everyone who witnessed the function was taken up by the flow of events and standard. Practically everyone had only positive comments to make. Thanks to everyone who worked hard here with dedication and self sacrifice in the past twenty five years.