 Reading time: 4 min.

Short biography
He completed his novitiate in the community of Pinerolo, Italy, professed his first vows on September 8, 1993, in Ljubljana Rakovnik, and his perpetual vows six years later. He received his theological training at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome from 1997 to 2000, and was ordained a priest in Ljubljana on June 29, 2001. As a priest, most of his educational and pastoral work was carried out within the Salesian work of Želimlje. From 2000 to 2003, he served as an educator and then, until 2020, as Director of the boarding school. During those years, he also taught religion at the high school and was responsible for the Salesian formation of the laity.
From 2010 to 2016, he was the Director of the Želimlje community and from 2021 to 2024, the Director of the Salesian Community of Ljubljana Rakovnik. From 2018 to 2024, he served as Vicar of the Inspector and his Delegate for Formation. In 2021, he also took on the coordination of this sector at the European level as the coordinator of RECN.
On December 6, 2023, he was appointed the 15th Inspector of the Province of Saints Cyril and Methodius of Ljubljana.

Can you introduce yourself?
I was born on May 30, 1974, in Ljubljana, Slovenia, into a farming family in a small village called Šentjošt. I am the youngest of 4 children, who all have families today, so I have 11 nieces and nephews and we are all very close. My native country and my family were strongly marked by the Communist terror during and after the Second World War. Some relatives were killed, houses destroyed… In the very difficult situation, my parents had to start building the farmhouse from scratch. They had to use all their hard work and resourcefulness to provide for us children. My parents involved us children in daily work and in this way, I also learned that to achieve something important you have to work hard.

Who first told you the story of Jesus?
My parents always openly expressed their Christian identity, even though being a Christian was not appropriate in those times, and they had quite a few problems because of this. Every evening, after the work was done, we gathered as a family to pray the rosary, the litanies, and other prayers. I liked being an altar boy and for this, I often walked to the church, which was 2 kilometres from my house, to attend

Mass. The example of my parents, Christian life in the family and in the parish are therefore the fundamental reasons for feeling God's call from an early age.

How did you meet Don Bosco?
My parents often went on pilgrimage to Ljubljana Rakovnik where the Salesians were, and so I also met Don Bosco, who fascinated me immediately. I started attending retreats organised by the Salesians and after elementary school at 14, it was very natural for me to go to the minor seminary led by the Salesians in Želimlje. My parents were very happy with my decision and always supported me on my journey. I am truly very grateful to them for all the love, for the peaceful family in which I grew up, and for so many important values that they passed on to me. Don Bosco also fascinated them, and so, in the process of my formation, they also made the promise as Salesian cooperators.

The experience of initial formation
I was in high school at the time when Communism collapsed and Slovenia became independent, and then the Salesians could resume our typical work. For this reason, I was taken by the enthusiasm of so many opportunities for youth work that were opening up. In the years spent in international formation houses in Italy, my horizons were also broadened because I had the opportunity to meet many Salesians from all over the world and live many new experiences. During this period, I worked a lot on my human and spiritual growth, and I also learned to love Don Bosco and his way of being and working with young people very much. I became more and more convinced that this is a path thought of by God for me and that the Salesian charism is a great gift for the young people of our time.

What is your best experience?
The 20 years spent in the boarding school in Želimlje and then in Rakovnik, living with almost 300 young people every day, were truly very beautiful and greatly marked my life. I had the privilege of following their human, intellectual, and spiritual growth and of touching their joys, hopes, and wounds from close up. The young people taught me how important it is to "waste" time being with them. In this period, I also learned and experienced how precious the lay collaborators are, without whom we cannot carry out our mission.

What are the local youth like and what are the most relevant challenges?
In the Salesian works and around our programmes there are still many generous young people, with open hearts and willing to do good for their peers. I am very

proud of their enthusiasm and also happy that many in Don Bosco find the model and strength for their human and spiritual growth.
On the other hand, it is also true that they are strongly marked by the virtual world and all the other challenges of our time. Fortunately, traditional values have not completely disappeared, but it is also true that they are no longer strong enough to guide young people. For this reason, we Salesians try to help young people with concrete proposals of support and by walking with them. At the last provincial chapter, we identified some poverties (challenges) of our context: the weak family, lukewarm spiritual tendency, relativism and the search for identity, passivity, apathy, and the lack of concrete preparation of young people for life.

Where do you find the strength to continue?
First of all, in the confreres. Fortunately, I have very good and generous confreres around me who are of great support to me. The provincial alone cannot do much. I am convinced that the only right way to progress is that we all (Salesians, young people, and lay people) contribute our gifts and strengths for the common good. And secondly, we all and our mission are only a small part in a great design of God. It is He who is the true protagonist and this awareness gives me great inner serenity.

What place does Mary Help of Christians occupy in your life?
Already in my family, I learned that Mary is a great support for daily life. I very willingly and with great confidence go on pilgrimage to the various Marian shrines, where Mary fills me with peace and inner strength for all the challenges of my life. I can testify to many of the graces that have been granted to me or my loved ones through Mary.

Fr. Peter KONČAN,
Slovenia Provincial