

TUGBOATS

...an additional help to steer a willing heart and mind into the harbour of life or out into the sea of living, as did Don Bosco, with and for the thousands of young people of his times.

A CALL TO SALESIAN LIFE





DARE TO BE FAITHFUL AND SURE TO BE PLENTIFUL!

Fr Koonan Thomas sdb (INK)

Attraction and never coercion or imposition was the way Jesus drew disciples. The early Salesians were enthralled by their experience at Don Bosco's oratory at Valdocco. Even those who risked just peeping, ended up never leaving the oratory. This remains the best way any organization or group can have committed members and dedicated followers. Among the fascinating factors with regard to the Salesian way of life are the following:

With the Divine visibly, undoubtedly and continuously at His work of creation also in the 19th century, Don Bosco, the founder of the Salesian Congregation, arrived at a realistic vision, a vibrant charism and an effective methodology which have withstood the test of time, place, culture, caste and creed. These have been much valued by the Church and appreciated by the world. It is centred on young people, a strong section of the population -

vulnerable and yet rich in promise – especially of developing nations.

Don Bosco never wants mere maintenance staff (it is better that the Congregation dies out if not relevant) but protagonists who will take forward in an equally relevant and effective manner what had been initiated through him so that the world of today especially the young may be enriched. The level of fidelity to his original inspiration has been remarkable. The range of possibilities both in reach (international) and intervention (multifaceted) offered by the Salesian vocation is enormous both in this world (132 countries) and even in the next (verified by the sanctity in the Salesian Family).

The research findings of modern sciences (sacred and secular) and contemporary disciplines (educational and ecclesiastical) continue to esteem Don Bosco's spirit of joy and optimism springing forth from his immense trust in divine providence, built on the pillars of reason, religion and loving kindness, and enmeshed in family spirit. So dare to be faithful and sure to be plentiful.

THE CHARISMA OF DON BOSCO

Fr Varghese Thannippara sdb (INK)

“Monk or no monk, always with Don Bosco!” That was the historic utterance by John Cagliero, later, Cardinal John Cagliero, on 9 December 1859, – an avowed declaration by a lad bewildered by Don Bosco's invitation to join him as began his religious society. Certainly, the dashing youngster in John Cagliero revolted against the thought of being bottled up in a monastery. But the magnetic personality of Don Bosco won over the young Cagliero whose protest became a protestation of love ... But “always with Don Bosco”. Yes, anyone who came to know Don Bosco could never forget him. This priest who walked in the company of popes and princes, without losing the common touch – the hearts of the street urchins and ragamuffins of Turin – was one of a different kind. A poor boy, Johnny Bosco, born in the little hamlet of Becchi, picked up by the Lord, to be a Priest, to be a link between the Church and the State – indeed, an

unthinkable blend in a Priest!!

Don Bosco's “heart as large as the sands on the shore of the sea” electrifies everyone – only a man with such a golden heart could declare unconditionally to the youth of the world: “... It is enough that you are young for me to love you.” If I had the privilege of a 1000 births, I vouch that at each birth I would opt to be with Don Bosco and beckon to the whole world – particularly to the young – to be with Don Bosco – to the discovery of a new world of wonder and joy, revolving around this rare saint – he really deserves the title: “friend of youth”. He was truly extraordinary! He dared to be different. Who would not fall in love with this Priest extraordinaire! I too, would join John Cagliero and proudly shout myself hoarse to the whole universe: “Monk or no monk, always with Don Bosco.”



A CALL TO ACCOMPANY THE YOUNG

Fr Joshrom Isaac Kureethadam sdb (INH)

No vocation is an end in itself. It is a response, sustained by God's grace, to a particular need or a cause. It was the cry of poor and abandoned youth, in the streets of industrialized Turin of the 18th century, that was at the origin of Don Bosco's own vocation, and of the very Salesian charism. Every Salesian vocation is, in fact, a humble yet timely response to the cry of the needy youth around the world.

My own vocation was born, when I was around 12 years old. On a summer afternoon, I happened to read the biography of Don Bosco that I found at home. I heard a call that day to become like Don Bosco to serve young people. As years passed by this call became louder, and eventually I joined the Salesians of Don Bosco on completing my initial studies.

The Salesian vocation is beautiful precisely for the opportunity to

accompany young people in need. A recent image that lingers in my mind is that of Kailash Satyarti who throws his arms around Malala Yousafzai. The photo was taken in a museum in Oslo which they were visiting the day after they were jointly awarded the 2014 Nobel for Peace. For the occasion, the museum curator had arranged for the display of the bullet-ridden school uniform that Malala was wearing at the time of the brutal attack by the Taliban. At the sight of the bloodstained dress, young Malaya broke into tears. Immediately, Satyarti, the man who has dedicated his life to freeing thousands of children from the shackles of bonded labour, gently threw his arms around the weeping Malaya. This photo has remained etched in my memory. I think it so poignantly captures the Salesian vocation: to kneel and embrace the needy young, as Don Bosco did, as the Good Samaritan of Jesus' own parable, did. ... As Pope Francis has reminded us with the proclamation of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, the world, especially poor and needy children and young people, are waiting for such a compassionate embrace. Any takers?

CALLED TO SHOW THE LOVING FACE OF GOD

Fr Maria Anand sdb (INK)

In the Bible we read that when God called, people took risks to answer the call (Noah, Abraham, Moses, Mary); some others needed help (Samuel, Joseph, the two disciples of John the Baptist); a few tried to run away (Elijay, Jonah, Peter, the disciples on the road to Emmaus)... but in all of these lives we see the design of God being fulfilled, in spite of their willingness or reluctance. It reminds us the words of prophet Jeremiah which says: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations" Jer 1:5. God calls each one of us for a specific and a unique mission. The letter of St Paul to the Ephesians reads, "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ." The call is given by God to

everyone. But responding to this Call of God depends solely on me; I can respond to it, ignore it, run away from it or block it. However each call is specific, so too is the call to be a Salesian.

In the first article of the Salesian Constitution it says, "Through the motherly intervention of Mary, the Holy Spirit raised up St John Bosco to contribute to the salvation of youth, that part of human society which is so exposed and yet so rich in promise." And to respond to this call, "The Spirit formed within Don Bosco the heart of a father and teacher, capable of total self-giving: "I have promised God that I would give of myself to my last breath for my poor boys." The call to be a Salesian is an evergreen one because the field of apostolate is immense and wide. India which is set to become the youngest nation in the world by 2020 with the median individual to be 29 years, offers a greater possibility.

The harvest is plenty and labourers few. So too the field of the young need labourers to show the loving face of God and enable them to become honest citizens and God loving persons. Are you willing to respond to this call of God to become a "sign and bearer of the love of God for young people, especially those who are poor?"



A MISSIONARY VOCATION FOR THE POOR YOUTH

Fr Narikunnel Sebastian (CJ) sdb (INK)

My thoughts go back to the morning of a Saturday when I expressed my desire to my mother, a widow, (I am the only child of my mother, my father had died when I was just an year old) that I wanted to join Don Bosco. The proposal was made, as I said, on a Saturday after I had participated in the Eucharist and a Novena to Our Lady. I was a regular church goer and an altar boy since when I was 10 years old. She asked me a question: Who is there to look after me? Without hesitation I asked, why don't you marry again? She was shocked as I could read from her face. She was silent for a while and told me that she would give me an answer soon. My mother was the president of Legion of Mary association of the parish. So on next Wednesday when they gathered together for the customary prayer meeting she asked her friends to pray for an intention as she has to take a decision with regard to her life. After the prayer she returned home and during a conversation she said, "You asked me a question. Now I have an answer. If that is what God wants me to do I am ready." To make the story short, she got married. But my step father died about 10 years ago leaving no children behind. I sold my inherited property and gave the money to my mother, not much as per today's standard. When I left home for Tirupattur in Tamil Nadu I had only one intention, to become a Salesian missionary priest. God was writing straight on a crooked line in my life.

As I reflect back today I am sure that this is what God wanted me to do. Why I wanted to join Don Bosco? As a boy I was much impressed by the life of Don Bosco. I had read it many times with great interest, thanks to Fr Philip Thayil, of happy memory, who got the life history translated into Malayalam. Don Bosco's life story was very encouraging, as it resembled mine. His love for the poor young people, his courage to face challenges, the deprivations, his paternal attitude and above all, his commitment to the cause of the abandoned children. He was a cheerful saint, very much down to earth, courageous, always wanting to learn new things which became handy as he was immersed in the apostolate. I wanted to follow this cheerful saint, because I too wanted to be happy.

I heard the call and responded to it positively, may not be to its entirety. I realized that he was calling me to do something special. There were struggles, misunderstandings, sicknesses, crosses, fatigue, doubts, etc. But I knew that God had His plans for me. Long live Don Bosco.

Know Don Bosco

1. When was the first boarder admitted to the oratory?
2. 1. What did Pope Pius XI say of Don Bosco?
3. Who is the author of the book *The Early Apostolate of Don Bosco*?
4. Who was the first Novice Master?
5. What was written on the door of Don Bosco's office?

(Names of those who send the right answers will be published in the next issue. Please send your answers to manunsdb@yahoo.com)

Answers for the October 2014 Issue

1. What is the central theme of the dream in Rome?
Family Spirit
2. What are the characteristic virtues of Salesians?
Work and Temperance
3. What was the special mark of Don Bosco's spirituality?
Loving Kindness
4. What was the name of the important dream Don Bosco had in 1847?
The Dream of Pargola of Roses
5. What was the motto of Archbishop Louis Mathias?
Dare and Hope

SALESIAN LIFE: A CALL TO BE MYSTICS

Fr Tharayil Thomas sdb (INK)

Few years back three young men met me on different occasions with the intent to become Salesians. They were all attracted with the mission that the Salesians carry out on behalf of the poor youth. After listening to them I told them to reflect, to pray and to return if only Jesus was an inspiration to them. Unfortunately none of the three came back to meet me again. Evidently they were attracted only by the work of the Salesians and Jesus meant almost nothing to them.

Religious life is a radical call to follow Jesus Christ – a challenge to a radical living of Christ’s discipleship. The vowed life of a religious is a call to live like Jesus Christ who was poor, chaste and obedient to the will of His Father. Such a life is counter cultural to today’s consumeristic, hedonistic and egocentric post-modern society. Only those daring enough to be counter cultural need to enter religious life with a view to transform the society by becoming prophetic signs of the Gospel values personally interiorized and lived. This is all the more so for Salesians who are called to be role models to the youth of today.

Inaugurating the Year of the Consecrated, Pope Francis called upon the Religious to “wake up the world”. The religious are to initiate a new life-style of authentic Gospel-based and Christ-centred religious living, capable of inspiring and inviting the people to wake up to a happier and fuller life attuned to God. It is the youth that needs our special attention lest they be drawn into the pernicious, destructive culture of the present times. This requires all the Salesians to embark on a radical Salesian life-style in this bicentenary year that would help bring about the Reign of God among the young in more tangible and lasting ways.

Our Rector Major has reiterated the recent General Chapter’s urgent call to the Salesians to be ‘Mystics in the Spirit’. The renowned theologian, Fr Karl Rahner SJ, had in his days underscored the essential ingredient of religious life when he said that, “a religious has to be a mystic or no religious at all.” Addressing the Union of Superiors General in Rome on 26th November 2010, Pope Benedict XVI declared that, “seeking God and keeping your face on Him is the essence of Religious Life.” In the Programme of Animation and Government for the six year period, our



Rector Major very clearly affirms: “...at the heart of our identity and the raison d’être for our religious life, in the final analysis is the experience of God. And again in the final analysis the question about the quality of life in religious life is the question about the quality of this experience of God” (Acts of the General Council, No.419, pg. 15-16).

A modern exponent of Religious life, Benedictine Sr Joan Chittister, does not mince words when she categorically states that, “For the person who cannot find God here (in Religious life), staying here is a mistake. For the person who does not seek God here, leaving is an imperative. For the person who can find God better some place else, leaving here is a grace” (The Fire in these Ashes pg. 45). These bold words indicate the non-negotiable element of Religious life today, compelling religious to make every effort to become a mystic or a God-saturated person. This is our challenge and our invitation to young people.

A CALL TO WALK THE PATH OF SANCTITY

Fr Savio D'Souza sdb (INB)

Young people are that marvellous part of our world who are ready to take on the world in their search for meaning in life. And I believe that the call to Salesian life is one significant way that can help them find this meaning in their personal life.

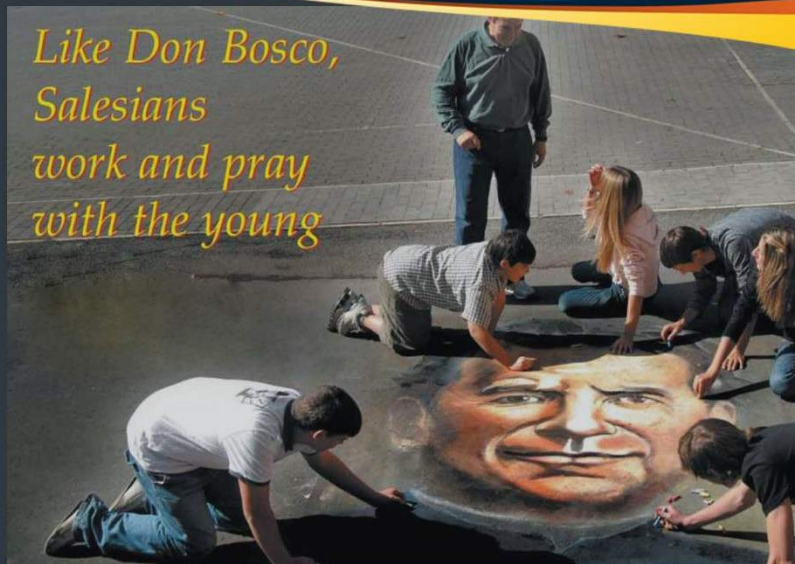
The Salesian ideal "Give me souls..." is a call that is directed towards the transcendent aspect of life. It is not merely a 'this-worldly' call, but one that addresses the drive within youngsters that aims for the stars. They are looking for something more than material, and this call when lived sincerely, will help them fulfil their potentialities, give vent to their creativity and consume their tremendous energy.

Many youngsters are looking for the spiritual in this world. The call to Salesian life is an invitation to work 'with' God and to work 'for' God. It is an opportunity to live in close proximity with God, and to live in his love, while also sharing this love with others in our apostolate. This call when responded to in all sincerity and humility leads to union with God.

While the call may culminate in living the Salesian Life as a Consecrated Religious with the vows, this life can also be lived as a lay-person, outside the settings of a seminary or religious community. The Salesian Youth Spirituality is a way of life and action that brings youngsters closer to the love of God 'in-the-world'.

This call is unique, this call is special, this call is a challenge. It is a dream, it is an opportunity, it is a path to sanctity. Come let's walk the path to saintliness together, with one another, with Don Bosco and with Jesus.

*Like Don Bosco,
Salesians
work and pray
with the young*



A CALL TO DO 'MORE'!

Fr Matthew Coutinho sdb (INB)

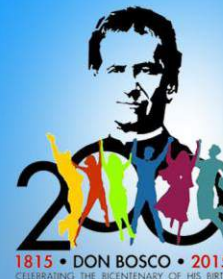
It has been my firm conviction over a number of years that the best advertisement is done by someone who is deeply convinced by the efficacy of the product or the service or the brand he/she promotes. I have lived as a Salesian for the last 35 years and am personally convinced that this vocation is wonderful, deeply fulfilling and challenging.

The one and only reason that I would invite young people to become Salesian is my personal belief that this way of life if pursued with deep conviction and dedication is a truly exciting, challenging and fulfilling project.

I am full of admiration and appreciation for those who work with seniors – they are definitely among those to be most admired for in one way their task is 'fruitless'. They are accompanying people in the evening of their lives and the end of their mission will be a 'peaceful and serene' ending.

For those of us who work with youth there is a hope that we hold the capacity to generate a new 'future' for the world, our country and our neighbourhood. We are opening a new book and have the capacity to impact young people who have their whole life before them, for whom the sky is the limit, who will dictate things in the world that is coming.

Hence, if you think that the Lord is calling you to follow Him more closely, and if you feel personally drawn to serving youth, if you wish to give your life to a higher cause, to bring about change in society, and to leave the world a better place simply because you were in it, then working with the young is a wonderful means to all these ends. Courage – pursue your heart – heed the call to do 'more'.



THE CALL TO BE A SIGN AND BEARER OF GOD'S LOVE

Cl. Ian Pinto sdb (INP)

Article 2 of the Salesian Constitutions begins thus: 'We, the Salesians of Don Bosco, form a community of the baptized.' The nature of our congregation therefore, is communitarian. We are not called to independent living and isolated working but to inter-dependent living and collaborative working. Community life is the core aspect of the Salesian identity. "How good it is for brothers to dwell as one" (Ps 133:1). Don Bosco wanted Salesian houses to become families where all feel welcome and responsible for the common good. He saw in community living an opportunity for witness. We are familiar with the hymn which goes, "they'll know we are Christians by our love." Along similar lines, Don Bosco wanted the Salesians to be known for their family spirit, pickled with optimism, joy, temperance, work and creativity in mission. The Salesian call is at its source, a call to follow Christ, the Good Shepherd. The Salesian spirit finds its model in the very heart of Christ, apostle of the Father (article 11). Christ is the reason for our becoming and remaining Salesian religious.

Another distinguishing characteristic of the Salesian call is to "be signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are poor" (article 2). The Salesian vocation is marked by this special predilection for the young. This love is an expression of pastoral charity and gives meaning to our whole life. Don Bosco is exemplary in this regard. He is famously quoted as saying, "That you are young is enough for me to love you very much" and again, "For you I study, for you I work, for you I am live, for you I am ready even to give my life." Don Rua, his first successor, said of him, "He took no step, he said no word, he took up no task that was not directed to the saving of the young." Such was Don Bosco's passion for the young. He realized his aim with firmness, constancy and the sensitivity of a generous heart, in the midst of difficulties and fatigue.

The Salesian calling involves an invitation by God to follow him closely and a commissioning to be apostles of the young. The call is meant to be lived in love consequently leading to the sanctification of one's soul. Mary is a dear companion of this journey. Don Bosco repeatedly recommended trust in Mary's intercession as a sure way to live out one's vocation and to carry on one's mission.

THE TRIANGLE OF SALESIANITY

Sr Mini Leon fma (INK)

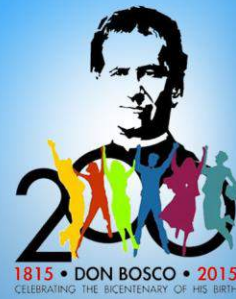
There are three aspects I would focus on while inviting young people to discern their Salesian vocation: a joyful love, a life of holiness and the youth ministry.

The novelty of Salesian life is the way of seeing things and persons with empathy and love. Salesian way is a joyful experience of living a life of love. This pastoral way results in doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way, in the company of and for the young. As Don Bosco, the founder of the Salesian Congregation said to the boys, for whom and with whom, he was working, "For you, I study, for you I work, for you, I live. For you, I am ready, even to give my life." This way is that of making the young feel loved, for who and what they are. This liberative method of training the youth for life is the hallmark of the Salesian vocation which is appealing and attractive to people, not only during Don Bosco's time but also even today.

Salesian life is a call to holiness. It consists in transforming our entire person. This holiness is prayer-action dialectic, where the active life keeps pace with the contemplation, effortlessly, blending the two dimensions. There is no sanctity without an interior life, nor there be an interior life without a immersion in action, inspired by the service of humanity. That is the nature of genuine spirituality, yesterday, today and always.

Reaching out to the young in the real situation of their lives, lies at the very heart of Don Bosco's approach, to spirituality, education and evangelization, which for him, are interchangeable, in the lived context of the mission.

Therefore, as Salesians, we invite young people to encounter God, through a joyful life of holiness which is holistic and integral. This joy when lived out in our day to day encounter with the young, becomes an invitation by itself.



A CALL TO SALESIAN HOLINESS

Sr Alice Chacko FMA (INK)

The personality of Don Bosco is an incomprehensible mystery to me! A combination of history and mystery, divinity and humanity! This is what we all are. But in Don Bosco divinity triumphed over humanity all the time unlike us. Thoughts fixed on heaven, he walked the earth with unlimited passion to take all whom he met along the way to friendship with God and to heaven. Indeed this great educator and extraordinary saint is a gift of God to the world and to the young in particular and to anyone seeking an easy way to become holy.

He established a family into which anyone of any age can enter and find true happiness. He left behind a style and a method of education, the result of a lived experience, that is relevant for all time. He showed to the young and the old a path to holiness that is so easy and exciting. There is no scourging, no hair shirt, no penitential sack cloth, no stones in the shoes...but with a smile on the lips, twinkle in the eye and a cheer in the heart, making every day a celebration one can be a saint like any other.

Don Bosco could click a friendship while shaving, could win over young ruffians while kicking a ball on the street with the cassock on, he could extend God's mercy to a sinner while waiting for the train

to arrive. "There is a time for sowing, a time for reaping..." says the Bible but for Don Bosco there is no fixed time. He could do anything at any time with an ease and confidence that he alone knew.

The path to holiness he proposed is a five-fold adventure through ordinary everyday life.

- "God sees you and loves you". The first step to holiness is live in the awareness of the presence of a living and loving God who cares.
- "Here sanctity consists in being cheerful" ... Cheerfulness at all times.
- A spirituality of daily life, making one's day a liturgy through meaningful celebration of life. Just do your duty well and that's it.
- "If you want many graces, pay many visits to Jesus in the Sacrament..." he used to remind the young people. The Eucharist was and is the heart of every salesian house.
- Marian devotion can never be missed in salesian life. You have a hand ever ready to hold you and guide you in Mary who will walk by your side all through.

Today when everyone seeks an easy way to reach the goal, to attain success, to gain wealth, to get to the top in an elevator, the salesian family invites all who wish to dare and hope and find a short cut to holiness. Want to try? Find a salesian house and enter in without delay. You will never regret the choice, for the Salesian charism will transform you!



Happy Easter!

Layout: Liju Joseph