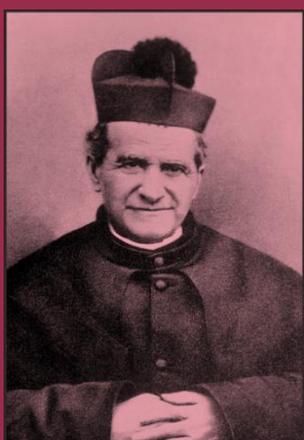


WALKING WITH SAINTS



YEAR OF FAITH 2012
2013

January 2013 St. DON BOSCO



EARLY LIFE: "There came a man sent from God, whose name was John" (Jn. 1:6). At a time of great flux in history and grave danger to the Church which was the 19th Century, God sent **John Melchior Bosco [16 Aug. 1815 – 31 Jan. 1888]**. Hailing from a poor family of semi-tenant farmers and orphaned at two, he grew up to be the father of the young. He faced innumerable obstacles on the path to his dream of pursuing an education, but he funded his studies working part-time as a farm hand, and then later in the city as an apprentice to a tailor, a cobbler, a blacksmith and a waiter. What enabled him to overcome these tremendous odds were a deep sense of faith, a profound awareness of the presence of a loving God and an unflinching trust in Providence. He had learned these from his devout mother who had that rare ability to make all of life's happenings a starting point for faith-formation. She taught him to see God at work in all situations, even the most unpleasant. When, for example, the crop in their small field, their only source of income, was destroyed by hailstones, she gave her three little children a faith-perspective on the tragedy, quoting from the Bible, *"The Lord has given, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21)*.

It was with a heart of faith that he (and his mother) interpreted a life-changing dream that he had at the age of nine, seeing in it God's plan for a priestly vocation. Supported by his mother's great sacrifice, John pursued that dream diligently, entering the seminary at the age of 20. John would always remember his mother's advice on the occasion of his receiving the cassock: *"John, my son, you have received the priestly habit, and I feel all the consolation a mother can experience at her son's good fortune. But remember that what gives honour to your state is not the habit but the practice of virtue. If ever you begin to doubt about your vocation, I beg you not to dishonour this habit. Lay it aside immediately. I would rather my son were a poor peasant than a priest who neglected his duties."* He was a model student and an exemplary seminarian. In those days, when daily communion was not common, John would skip his breakfast everyday so as to be able to receive Holy Communion daily. This profound love for the Sacraments was instilled in him by his holy mother. She had given him a long and thorough preparation to receive his First Communion at the age of 11. *"I am convinced"*, she said to her son on that day, *"that God has taken possession of your heart. Now promise me that you will do all you can to keep yourself good all your life."*

MISSION: On the day of John's ordination on 5 June 1841, his mother's advice again set before him a faith-response: *"John, you are a priest now and you have begun to say Mass; from now on you are closer to Jesus Christ. But remember that to begin to say Mass is to begin to suffer. ... I'm sure that you will pray for me every day whether I am still alive or already dead, and that is enough for me. From now on think only of the salvation of souls, and do not worry at all about me"*. The new priest, Don Bosco ("Don" = "Priest"/"Father" in Italian) received many attractive career offers, but he rejected all of them and chose to work for the poor and abandoned boys in the city. Only a deep trust in Providence and a firm faith could enable him to say no to financial security and step into the unknown world of work for street boys with no income and no place of his own. But he would reply to a noble lady who offered him, with excellent remuneration, the chaplaincy of a girls' hostel, *"You can find many other priests for your work, but my poor boys have no one else and I will not abandon them."* His entire life would be a daily experience of Divine Providence: food bills to be paid, constructions to be completed, new works to be begun, education of his students and seminarians to be funded...but the Lord always provided, even if it meant that Don Bosco had to go around begging among high society...and often in miraculous ways too. **He had a childlike, almost blind, trust in Our Lady. At the end of his life, as he did all through, he would repeat, "I have been an instrument in the hands of Mary. She has done everything."**

THE ENTERPRISE OF HOLINESS: Apart from his mother, the other big influence on Don Bosco's faith-life in later years was his spiritual director, Don (Saint) Joseph Cafasso. Don Bosco idolized Don Cafasso for his deep interior life, profound discernment, ascetical spirit, hard work and zealous ministry especially to young prisoners. Don Bosco entrusted himself with complete abandon to Don Cafasso's guidance.

Don Bosco would make each boy a partner in a grand enterprise: *"Do you want to be Don Bosco's friend?"* he would ask each new boy who came to him. *"You do? Then, you must help me save your soul."* In his homes, Don Bosco proposed holiness to his boys as an attractive and easy goal: It is possible to become a saint and it is easy to become a saint through the cheerful fulfilment of one's daily duties: *"Pray when it's time to pray. Study when it's time to study. Play when it's time to play. Show kindness to everyone you meet. But do it all for the love of Jesus."* He would, in fact, tell his boys, *"Here in Don Bosco's house, holiness consists in being cheerful."*

When Pope Pius XI (who, as a young priest, had known Don Bosco personally) declared Don Bosco a saint on Easter Sunday, 1 April 1934, the Pope styled him "a giant of sanctity." These words which Pope John Paul II addressed, in 2002, to the sons of Don Bosco can be equally valid for JY today: **"Salesians of the third millennium! Be passionate teachers and guides, saints and formers of saints, just as Saint John Bosco was.... Attentive educators and competent spiritual companions, you will know how to go forth seeking young people who desire to see Jesus. You will know how to direct them with gentle firmness towards the demanding goals of Christian fidelity"**.

Don Bosco's life is another proof that saints come in a bunch- Saints, Blesseds and others on the way to the honours of the Altar who grew in holiness together with Don Bosco: *Joseph Cafasso, Dominic Savio, Maria Mazzarello, Aloysius Versiglia, Leonard Murialdo, Louis Orione, Louis Guanella, Michael Rua, Philip Rinaldi, Louis Variara, Augustus Czartoryski, Mamma Margaret, Andrew Beltrami...* **Our JY fellowships and especially our JY Households can be "the good soil" for the seed of sanctity to sprout in and must become nurseries of holiness where holiness flourishes and saints grow in clusters.**

We can see very strong parallels between the youth spirituality that Don Bosco proposed and our own JY spirituality: both have a strong devotion to the Eucharist and to Mary, both look to the Word of God to illumine daily living, both foster a passionate love for the Church, both rely on the Sacraments for growing in faith and holiness, both have a strong sense of belonging and family spirit, both share a radiating joy, both see the daily routine as the place to encounter God through diligent dutifulness, both believe in the generosity and potential of young people to become missionaries to each other and optimistic Kingdom-builders in the world through service, both help young people to discover the meaning of their lives in the light of God's plan for them. **Don Bosco' oratory was a school of holiness (St. Dominic Savio was its best fruit). The JY Movement too has the potential to make saints.**



WALKING WITH SAINTS



YEAR OF FAITH 2012
2013

1st -7th January 2013

St. DON BOSCO

Quote of St. Don Bosco

"I keep going by the fire of faith and confidence in God, for without it empires and kingdoms fall and the work of man is useless."

Prayer (Thanksgiving for the gift of faith)

Oh Lord, creator and father of all men, for whom you desire that all reach the knowledge of the truth and be saved, I thank you with my whole heart that you have clearly revealed to us the truths of wellbeing, and that you have given them to us to believe through the infallible authority of the Holy Catholic Church.

Praise and glory to you, Lord who- without any merit on my part, but through your love and mercy alone -have called me into the light of this true and wholesome faith. How happy I am for this gift! Oh! How I can walk securely and happily on this path of virtue in the light of this faith, endure the miseries of this life with joy, courage and fortitude, and with hope and peace in my heart prepare myself for eternity!

Increase in me, O Lord, esteem and love for the revealed truths, and for the Magisterium of the Catholic Church established by You; preserve me from indifference to religion, sustain me with Your fatherly hand, so that I may never extinguish a light so precious nor ever fall into the abyss of error and impiety. Grant that with simplicity of heart I may submit every hour to the teachings of the Church, preserve them, profess them without fear all my life and put them into practice so that, after having known and glorified You upon this earth, I may come one day to contemplate and possess You in Heaven. Amen.



WALKING WITH SAINTS



YEAR OF FAITH
2012
2013

8th -14th January 2013

St. DON BOSCO

Quote of St. Don Bosco

“Not all of us can fast, or undertake arduous journeys in God’s service, or give generous alms, but we can all love. All it takes is the sincere desire to do so.”

Prayer (*Prayer for graces*)

Oh Father, O Son and O Holy Spirit! O Most Holy Trinity, O Jesus, O Mary. Blessed Angels, Saints and All Saints in Paradise, obtain for me these graces which I ask through the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ:

to always do the will of God; to always remain in union with God; to not think of anything but God; to love God alone; to be able to do everything for love of God; to seek only God’s glory; to become a saint only for God; to understand well my own nothingness; to know ever more the will of my God; (Add a particular grace that one desires). Most Holy Mary, offer to the Eternal Father the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ for my soul, for the holy souls in purgatory, for the needs of the Holy Church, for the conversion of sinners, and for the whole world. Amen



WALKING WITH SAINTS



YEAR OF FAITH 2012
2013

15th -21st January 2013

St. DON BOSCO

Quote of St. Don Bosco

“Remember, it is almost impossible to reach Jesus without Mary’s mediation. Therefore, entrust everything to her, especially your soul “

Prayer (*Prayer to Mary Help of Christians*)

A prayer written by Don Bosco in honor of Mary, Help of Christians. Don Bosco zealously promoted devotion to Mary under this Title. Don Bosco’s remains are preserved in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians that he himself built in Turin in 1869. His frequent exhortation used to be, “Have devotion to Mary Help of Christians and you will see what miracles are.”]

O Mary, powerful Virgin, you are the mighty and glorious protector of the Church; you are the marvelous ‘Help of Christians’; you are terrible as an army in battle array; you alone have destroyed every heresy in the whole world. In the midst of our struggles, our anguish, and our distress, defend us from the power of the enemy and at the hour of death, receive our souls into Paradise. Amen.



WALKING WITH SAINTS



YEAR OF FAITH 2012
2013

22nd -31st January 2013

St. DON BOSCO

Quote of St. Don Bosco

"Your mortification should be your diligence in doing your duties and in putting up with the annoyances of others."

Prayer (Blessing of Mary Help of Christians)

(Don Bosco composed and always used to bless persons, and still used today especially all over the Salesian world)

Invocation (Leader): Our help is in the name of the Lord,

Response: Who made heaven and earth. (Hail Mary...)

L: We fly to your Patronage, O holy Mother of God, despise not our petitions in our necessities, but always deliver us from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin. Mary help of Christians, R: Pray for us. L: O Lord, hear my prayer. R: And let my cry come to you. L: The Lord be with you. R: And also with you. L: Let us pray: R: All-powerful, eternal God, by the cooperation of the Holy Spirit you made ready the body and soul of the glorious Virgin Mother Mary to be a fit dwelling-place for your Son. As we celebrate her memory with joy, grant that through her motherly intercession we may be preserved from evil in this world and from eternal death. Through Christ our Lord, Amen

(Blessing by Priest/Deacon: Through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit descend upon you and remain with you forever).

Amen.

