

Questions to the Rector Major at SYM2015 on 18 August 2015

1. Rector Major, let's begin with an easy question. What is your impression of this celebration of Don Bosco's birthday?

As you can imagine, dear young people, I think it is a wonderful celebration, since all of you are here, young boys and girls coming from 58 countries.

I am moved at the beauty of this meeting and the precious attitude you, the young, show. I am moved by your joy and the ease with which you pass from music and dance to reflection and prayer. I am moved by your sensibility and solidarity towards the minority groups here present.

And then I want to tell you that we are celebrating a birthday that had to be celebrated. Why do I say this? For two reasons:

- a. Because we cannot remain indifferent to Don Bosco's birthday (the Bicentenary of his birth), because Don Bosco does not belong to us, but - as I said several times in the course of the year - he is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church and to the world, and he is still absolutely modern and continues to fascinate people all over the world, today like yesterday, as "Father and Teacher of the Young", as he was proclaimed by Pope John Paul II in 1988;
- b. The second reason is that, in a Salesian environment and as Salesian Family, it is possible to imagine to celebrate Don Bosco's birthday only WITH THE YOUNG, AMONG THE YOUNG. What we cannot imagine is, for instance, if we had chosen to hold a congress on the management and organization of labour as the central act of August 16th, 2015. Impossible. On the contrary, we are holding an International Meeting of the Young.

For this I repeat that this seems to me a wonderful celebration of the Bicentenary.

2. How can we, the young, be of help especially to you Salesians and to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians?

Letting the heart speak, and not only the mind, the first thing that comes to my mind is this:

- My dear youth, help us to be like Don Bosco and Maria Mazzarello.
- Help us to be ever more generous and to give you our whole life, as they did.
- Remind us, every moment, with your presence among us, that the young boys and girls were always in the heart of Don Bosco and of Mother Mazzarello.
- Ask us to accompany you to pray together, ask us with greater strength to be always among you, ask us to help you in the journey of life, especially when you are most in need of it. Do not be afraid to bother us. THIS MUST NEVER BE A NUISANCE FOR A SALESIAN HEART.
- Finally, I tell you the reason of what I just suggested to you: this is because we must never forget that also the boys of Valdocco and the girls of Mornese made Don Bosco's heart and Mother Mazzarello's heart greater. Let

us not forget that those boys and girls, with their presence, their looks, their prayer ... made Don Bosco's heart and Mother Mazzarello's heart grow ever more with the passing of time.

And you too can do this with all those who live the precious, wonderful, beautiful challenge of being Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello today, i.e. all the Salesians (SDB) and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) of the world.

3. Fr. Ángel, as Rector Major, what do you think would Don Bosco tell and ask the young here present today, and the young of the world?

- Undoubtedly, he would say what he always said to his boys: to keep Jesus as the sense of their lives, as the Centre of their lives. That they never abandon Him, never put Him aside in their lives. And that they always keep Mary Help of Christians in their hearts, because she will do everything for you.
- And he would tell you, just as I tell you now, that we believe in you, that we really believe you are good and that in the heart of every young boy and girl there are always the seeds of goodness and kindness.
- He would tell you never to cease to be the true leading characters of your life.
- And reminding you to be honest citizens and good Christians, and knowing our world today, he would tell you to be men and women of goodness, to be honest, to work honestly, to be just with the others, to be people who never exploit the others. He would tell you to have a merciful heart towards those who are suffering, those who have less (than we do), those who are immigrants, defenceless... I AM CONVINCED THIS WOULD BE DON BOSCO'S LANGUAGE TODAY.

4. And in tune with Don Bosco, what is the dream of the Rector Major for us, the young of today?

You know, I often ask myself this question, as I go to know the youth of the world. And in my heart, this is what I feel:

1. I dream, as Don Bosco would say, that God be always in the life of each young boy and girl who is in a Salesian house, and then throughout their lives. My dear youth, the best thing we can offer is WHAT HAS FILLED OUR LIVES TO THE POINT OF CHOOSING TO BE SALESIANS AND DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS;
2. I dream of something Mother Yvonne already said yesterday: that nothing and nobody may stifle or steal your dreams of goodness, of kindness, of a better humankind;
3. I dream that the youth of the Salesian houses in the world be capable to be an alternative, to be counter-cultural in what is important and necessary to go against the mainstream. I dream of youth who, for the fact that they think and are just and have a great heart, are capable to say YES and NO with great freedom.

5. The Rector Major has chosen as motto for the Strenna 2015 the slogan "Like Don Bosco, with the Young, for the Young" – just as Pope Francis

entitled his letter to the Salesian Family. What does this mean to us, the young of SYM DON BOSCO 2015, and for the youth of the whole world, this message "for the Young"?

This message does not only have much significance, but rather it has ALL ITS SIGNIFICANCE for you, because you are not the young people of the Salesian environment only to receive, but also to GIVE and to GIVE YOURSELVES.

- I am convinced that for the fact that you are here you have a special sensibility, to understand that many thousands and thousands of youth all over the world need you.
- As you know, Pope Francis invites us to be Christians (as the Church herself does) who go forth, who reach out, to the encounter with others. Well, you have a lot to give and to offer to other youth.
- The Pope asked us, as Salesian Family, in Valdocco on 21st June, not to lose this capability of being CONCRETE and practical. Well, you too can do a lot in this challenge that he launched to us, to respond in a concrete and valid way to the challenges and exigencies of many youth and families. URGENT and CONCRETE responses to URGENT and CONCRETE situations.
- The Pope invites all Christians, and you too, the young, to be RADICAL: well, to my mind, the concrete Salesian way to be radical, both for you and for us is this "being-for-the-others", trying to reach out to those who are far away, making concrete and valid choices for the poorest, the "outcast" of our societies. ULTIMATELY, WE MUST FEEL UNEASY AS LONG AS the poor are beside us, or even far way from us, (as long as there are) homeless people, persons who suffer from violence, persons who are exploited.
I CANNOT THINK OF A BETTER WAY THAN THIS FOR BEING THE YOUTH OF SALESIAN ENVIRONMENTS, OFFERING SOMETHING VALID AND BECOMING THE VOICE OF THE VOICELESS.

This is all, from me. I thank you, dear youth, for your welcome and your listening. Many thanks.