



## Oratory – Youth Centre

Thanks to a project sponsored by VIS and financed by the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and after we built an area where young people could come for activities, we have begun an oratory with youngsters from the local area, and we try to bring in as many as possible from the urban area. This characteristic Salesian oratory work in Bosnia and Herzegovina was unknown in the area before the Salesians came, so we are pioneering activity of this kind. At the moment our main concern is to open our doors to everyone who wishes to come and be part of a welcoming, calm place where everyone can find something that responds to their tastes. Our weekend oratory attracts some 250 youngsters with a team of leaders to look after them. The second characteristic activity is forming

leaders and educators in general so that in the future we will have a team to whom we can entrust the future work for young people. At the core of our weekend oratory work is the Sunday Mass which is a time for meeting up and sharing in the community around the Lord.

## Our challenges

The small religious community is made up of three priests and a brother in practical training, who do their best to be Don Bosco for today's youngsters through their witness and tireless effort. But there are still difficulties in the nation, many uncertainties, many things lacking which affect the nation's youth, many of whom do not believe that they can hope to achieve much more than simple survival if they remain there. Of the 30,000 inhabitants 5,500

are of school age – primary, secondary. This indicates that the youth population is about a third of the total. But what awaits them afterwards? What are the education models in place? What will society give them? What kind of adult models do they have? Unfortunately the answers are somewhat limited and not acceptable for us as Salesians. We would like to offer them alternative models and life choices, help them see and believe that the future is especially in their hands. The Lord never tires of His people, and will continue to be the Lord of history despite human sinfulness. Don Bosco Žepče is just one of the drops of Divine Mercy that has fallen in this beautiful place, a paradise that human wickedness has turned into a vale of tears. Such is the story of civilisation, but one redeemed by the Lord, where through and at times despite us, He is still present. 

