

To the Youth of the Salesian Youth Movement Message of the Rector Major

Turin, 31 January 2003

My dear young people,

I address you on the feast of our beloved Father. And my first thought is one of gratitude to the Lord for the precious gift that he has given us in Don Bosco, the spiritual father of youth and of the entire Salesian Family, the teacher and model of holiness. It is the first time that I write to you and I do it willingly, as Don Bosco had done and as Rev. Fr. Vecchi did several times during his term.

I would like to speak on behalf of all the Salesians, recalling for each of you before anything else the words which the members of the last General Chapter of the Congregation had written to you: *“We want to be for you and with you.... We are with you in the search for Love that gives full meaning to life and leads to happiness.... We want to renew our pledge: the door of our hearts and of our houses are always open for you.”* (Documents of the General Chapter 25, *Message to the youth*, no. 139). These words express our desire to remain faithful to the mission entrusted to us and serve as our renewed commitment, demanding from all a continuous effort of openness, welcome, dialogue, and understanding. Precisely on this line I have proposed to all the Salesian Family the strenna of communion for the year 2003: *“Let us make every family and every community the home and the school of communion.”*

Dear young people, to you I also bring the same gift for the year which we are starting: Believe in God-Trinity, in God-Communion, build communion on all levels, live in communion with other youths, witness to the world the prophecy of communion.

Every day you meet and relate with so many persons. At times, building understanding and communion comes easy, but oftentimes, it becomes difficult. The friendship among peers, the life in a group, the sharing of numerous experiences are clear signs that we are made for encounter and communion. But if we look at our restless and troubled world, we realize

how difficult it is for persons, peoples, and nations to live in communion. For this reason, at the start of the new year the Pope invited us to be tireless builders of peace: “*peace on earth: an ongoing commitment,*” to foster the values of freedom and truth, of justice and love, precisely because the peaceful living together of persons and peoples demands a constant and enduring commitment.

In your celebration of the World Forum of the Salesian Youth Movement in the year 2000, you yourselves identified the importance of the theme of communion and coordination among the conclusions and commitments which you embraced. I take up anew these indications and invite you to commit yourselves in a concrete way to the building of communion.

Build communion above all in the environments where you live every day. Communion in the family, in acceptance and mutual respect between parents and children, between youth and adults. Look at the generation gap as a possibility for growth and enrichment, not as a reason for conflict and quarrelling. Communion in the environments of study and work, where often the inverse logic of indifference and power play prevails. Communion in the educative environments which frequent, overcoming possible misunderstandings and competition. Don Bosco desired that “the family spirit” would permeate each of his settings, such that every young person would feel properly at ease and would find a positive ambience of serene friendship and spontaneous confidence.

Build communion within the Salesian Youth Movement. This is by definition the venue of communion for all the Salesian groups and associations which are recognized because of the same spirituality and the same educative commitment. Exert effort so that on all levels and in more opportune ways, the SYM would be a venue of sharing and an opportunity of networking in order to attain common initiatives, coordinated proposals, and joint projects.

Build communion in the local Church, participating actively in the proposals and initiatives programmed for the youth. Strive to be present in the coordinating bodies of youth ministry in the diocese, bringing the originality and richness of the Salesian charism. Collaborate with other groups, associations, and ecclesial movements, striving to work hand in hand for the good of so many children and youth.

Build communion likewise in the locality and civil society of which you are a part. In opposition to all forms of intolerance and restriction, be builders of dialogue and openness. Welcome everyone, especially those more fragile and poor. Commit yourselves to create a culture of openness and communion. Be present also in those places where people develop the guidelines and make the decisions that concern the good of society.

This is the very same commitment that the Pope entrusted to you during the World Youth Day in Toronto, when he told you: *“The aspiration that humanity nurtures, amid countless injustices and sufferings, is the hope of a new civilization marked by freedom and peace. But for such an undertaking, a new generation of builders is needed. Moved not by fear or violence but by the urgency of genuine love, they must learn to build, brick by brick, the city of God within the city of man. Allow me, dear young people, to consign this hope of mine to you: you must be those ‘builders!’ You are the men and women of tomorrow. The future is in your hearts and in your hands. God is entrusting to you the task, at once difficult and uplifting, of working with him in the building of the civilization of love.”* (Toronto, Discourse of John Paul II during the Vigil of Saturday, 27 July 2002, nos. 3—4)

My dear youth, you are certainly aware that building communion is a demanding commitment, which calls for inner strength and continuous formation. Communion is built before all else in one’s heart and one’s life. It can happen to all of us that we find ourselves not at all in communion with our very selves, that we feel fragmented, divided, devoid of peace. Our rhythm of life, often frenetic and under pressure, can lead us to anxiety and dissipation. We should always be on guard in order that our daily life may regain its unity.

As believers, remember that the secret and force behind our becoming men and women of communion is our *intimate communion with God through a personal friendship and relationship with Jesus Christ*. Know him, love him, be close to him. From this deep and authentic friendship with Christ, it will be easier to build and bear witness to communion in every environment and place of life.

Dear youth, I invite you to turn your gaze to *Mary, Mother of the Church and of the Salesian Family*. She, who lived in intimate communion with her Son Jesus, took part also in the birth of the Church, an experience of communion for all believers and the center of unity for all the children of God. The year which in we are living (October 2002—October 2003) was proclaimed by the Pope “The Year of the Rosary.” Heed his invitation to rediscover this Marian and Christological prayer; learn with and from Mary to contemplate the mystery of Christ; pray the rosary by yourselves, in your families, and in your groups; treasure the rosary, “by its nature a prayer for peace,” (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae* 40), in order to ask for the gift of concord and peace, of reconciliation and forgiveness, of communion among individuals, peoples, and nations.

I conclude this message announcing to you an anniversary which we will recall in a particular way the following year 2004: *the 50th anniversary of the canonization of Dominic Savio*. We can affirm that Dominic was among

the first members of the Salesian Youth Movement, even if at that time the Salesian associations carried another name. In him we can discover the goal to which all are called by the Lord: *“this high standard of ordinary Christian living.”* (Novo Millennio Ineunte 31)

Build communion; may this commitment which I entrust to you render the Salesian Youth Movement more robust and ready to take up with special intensity this challenge of youthful holiness.

Fr. Pascual Chávez V.

Rector Major, 9th Successor of Don Bosco

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