A final greeting to benefactors and Cooperators

My good benefactors,

I feel that the end of my life is approaching, and the day on which I must pay the common tribute to death and descend into the grave is well nigh. Before leaving this world for eternity, I wish to fulfil a duty towards you and so satisfy an ardent desire of my heart.

The debt I must repay is one of gratitude for all you have done to help me educate so many poor youngsters in a Christian way, putting them on the way to virtue and work, so they could be the consolation of their families, useful to themselves and to civil society and especially so they might save their souls and so be happy in eternity.

Without your charity I would have been able to do little or nothing; with your charity instead, we have cooperated with God's grace, dried many a tear and saved many a soul. With your charity we have founded any number of colleges ([boarding schools] and hospices where thousands of orphans are and have remained, rescued from abandonment, taken out of danger of irreligion and immorality, and by means of a good education, study and learning a trade or art, been made good Christians and solid citizens.

With your charity we have established missions at the ends of the earth, in Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, and sent hundreds of Workers for the Gospel to extend and cultivate the Lord's vineyard.

With your charity we have set up printing presses in various cities and towns, published millions of copies of books and broadsheets amongst the people in defence of the truth, to encourage piety and support morality.

Again with your charity we have built many chapels and churches in which, for centures to come until the end of the world God's praises and the praises of the Virgin Mary will be sung, and many souls be saved.

Convinced that, after God, all this and so many other good things were acheived through the effective help of your charity, I feel the need to thank you and so before closing my final days I thank you with the most profound gratitude and from the depths of my heart.

But if you have helped me with so much kindness and perseverance, now I ask you to continue to help my successor after my death. The works I have begun with your support no longer need me, but they continue to need you and all those who, like you, love to foster good on this earth. I entrust and recommend them all to you then.

For your encouragement and comfort I leave it to my successor to see that in the common and private prayers that are said and will be said in Salesian houses, our benefactors will always be included, and that there is always the intention that God may grant a hundredfold for their charity in the present life, through health and harmony in the family, prosperity on their farms and in their affairs and freedom from every disgrace, keeping these far from them.

I also note for your encouragement and comfort that the most effective work for obtaining pardon for sins and being sure of eternal life is charity given to little children: *Uni ex minimis*, to a little abandoned one, as our Divine Master Jesus assures us. I note how in these times where we feel so much the lack of material means for education and educating poor and abandoned youngsters in the faith and good morals, the holy Virgin herself becomes their protector; therefore she obtains for their benefactors many spiritual graces and even extraordinary temporal ones.

I myself and with me all the Salesians are witness to the fact that many of our benefactors who were earlier down on their luck, became much more well-to-do after they began to lavish charity on our orphans.

In view of this and taught by the experience of not a few of them, who one way or another told me this more than once in these or similar words: I do not want you to thank me when I offer charity to your poor boys; I should be thanking you for asking me. Since I began helping your orphans my own welfare has tripled. Another gentleman, 'Commendatore' Antonio Cotta, who often came to bring alms, said: the more money I bring for these works the more my business progresses. It is a fact that the Lord gives me in this life a hundredfold for what I give out of love for him. He was an outstanding benefactor of ours until he was 86, when God called him to eternal life to enjoy the reward of his kindness.

Although tired and worn out I will never cease speaking about you and recommending you to my boys, whom I am about to abandon; even I have to call it quits and lay down my pen.

Adieu, my dear benefactors, Cooperators, adieu.

I have not got to know many of you personally in this life, but that does not matter: in the other world we will all come to know each other and in eternity we will rejoice together for the good that with God's grace we have done on this earth, especially on behalf of poor youth.

If, after my death, the divine mercy, through the merits of Jesus Christ and the protection of Mary Help of Christians, finds me worthy of ebing received into Paradise, I will always pray for you, pray for your families, your dear ones, that one day they may all come to praise the Creator's majesty in eternity, and drink of his divine delights to the full, sing his infinite mercies, *Amen*.

Always your most obedient servant,

Fr John Bosco.