

**RM's greeting to authorities and others at Colle  
Saturday, 16 August 2014**

To their excellencies

**Bishop Guido Fiandino**

Auxiliary, Turin

**Bishop Francesco Guido Ravinale**

Bishop of Asti

**Dr. Pier Luigi Faloni**

Prefect of Asti

I would like to thank you for being here with us at Colle Don Bosco and for your words of welcome to me on this day when we open the Bicentenary of Don Bosco's birth.

I also greet all civic and religious authorities here today, Salesian Family members, residents of Castelnuovo and outlying areas, friends and especially young people.

It is right and proper that the opening of this event, celebrated around the world at the same time, should take place here at the Becchi where Don Bosco's birthplace is; where he worked in the fields around here as a child; where he had his early experiences of faith and apostolate, and where he grew up amidst financial and family difficulties. Your presence honours this celebration, but in particular it recognises the gift God has given his land and young people throughout the world in the person of Don Bosco.

To come back here to the Becchi is to return to the source. This is the land of the dream. We cannot possibly forget our origins: Don Bosco's charism arose here. All of us, members of the Salesian Family, were born here. We cannot safeguard our identity except by recalling this roots of ours. These poor and humble beginnings, this trusting abandonment to God, constancy in overcoming trials are in contrast to the subsequent development of Don Bosco's work, which was prodigious and so unexpected. Thus the dream came true. But this simple and poor lifestyle must continue to be what characterises us; so we must continually come back here to learn how to live out Don Bosco's charism today.

John Bosco was a son of Francis Bosco and Margaret Occhiena, peasant farmers. When he was two years old, his father fell seriously ill with pneumonia and died at 33 years of age. Francis Bosco left his wife a widow of 29 years of age, with three children to raise: Anthony, the child of his first marriage, Joseph and John. Margaret also had to look after and assist her mother-in-law: Margaret Zucca, who was elderly and infirm. This was a time of famine and 'Mama Margaret', as Salesians have always known her, had to struggle and work in the fields with great sacrifice in order to support her family and also John's desire for schooling, despite his step-brother Anthony, who felt that time spent with books was time and money wasted while he was left to plough the ground.

Over this year, especially for those of you who live here and safeguard this precious memory, you will be able to come back here to the Becchi and draw on this history to inspire the choices you make in life. And this is my wish for all of you. May Don Bosco inspire and intercede for us.

Rector Major's Greeting to the Mayor of Castelnuovo, the Town Council and Parish Council.

August 15, 2014 5.30 p.m.

Your Honour the Mayor, civic, military and religious authorities here present, Salesian confreres, FMA Sisters, citizens of Castelnuovo and parishioners of this community.

I am pleased to be able to respond to your welcome in a simple but official way, in a familiar but genuine way, emphasising once again this moment we find ourselves in, the beginning of the Bicentenary of St John Bosco's birth. As Don Bosco's tenth successor I thank you first of all for what you have done, are doing and will do, in union with the local Church and Salesian Family, for this Bicentenary event.

It is an event much longed for and worked for, by people from this area, by all of us, as an event of grace and divine blessings in the name of this great believer who is St John Bosco.

Your town, which you so authoritatively represent, bears John Bosco's name as part of its name, such that Don Bosco's birthplace is fully identified in this great Saint, becoming part of the civil naming, a complete identification.

It is precisely by this name that we who do not have the good fortune of living here, recognise you anywhere around the world! This town is a unique one for having given birth to many Saints, more prolific than any other town on earth can boast when compared to its population.

May this blessing, this presence of God, certified in the Saints from Castelnuovo presage through this Bicentenary every possible good thing, deep spiritual renewal, owning your Baptism, faith in God... being strong and energetic as Don Bosco teaches us to be.

Our holy founder, a son of this land and rich in the qualities of his people, would not have wanted long and fanciful speeches but a strong, rich faith, firm and concrete...a faith that will lead us to heaven. From this land, this people Don Bosco drew his spiritual children his first collaborators, and God gave him an example of youthful holiness formed in the school at Valdocco. This flow which involves Don Bosco here, and people of Castelnuovo amongst his spiritual sons and daughters has never been interrupted.

In your town, dear citizens of Castelnuovo, your fellow citizen Don Bosco drew on the true roots of this people, the roots of faith, tireless charity which Don Bosco learned here from his mother, from all the Christian community, the priests who accompanied him in his early days as he discerned his Christian life and calling. It was here that he learned the effort of working in the fields, of privation, of sense of duty and the value of intelligent, tenacious work...which bore fruit.

And he allowed himself to be guided by his great fellow citizen, St Joseph Cafasso, along the path that God was leading him, far beyond any human certainties. This Christian community forged a true faith in him, one that extended throughout his life through a charity which reached out to every continent, a charity without borders.

This is what we are contemplating today at the beginning of this Bicentenary.

In Don Bosco's name I entrust to you all those who pass through here this coming year. Welcome them as you always do with the warmth and affection you have always known how to offer, as children returning to the home of their common father, from wherever they happen to be.

Keep this very much at heart, each according to our particular vocation and responsibilities, so we continue on into the future with Don Bosco's heart, with true hope ... especially for the younger generations as Don Bosco has taught us.