



DIREZIONE GENERALE OPERE DON BOSCO

Via della Pisana 1111 - 00163 Roma

*Il Rettor Maggiore*

## **Message to the Youth of the Salesian Youth Movement 2014**

*Dream big and follow your dreams*

*with joy, enthusiasm and conviction*

My Beloved Young People,

I cannot hide my excitement in writing to you my last message as the Rector Major. I wish that my words reach your hearts to tell you that I have always loved you and will continue to do so. You are the center of my life, my prayer and my work. You are my joy, my source of inspiration and hope for the present and for the future that God holds for me.

Thank you for the love you have always shown me, for your prayers that have supported me in the difficult moments of these years of my service. I see your faces aglow with the joy of living and believing, and at the same time clouded by an uncertain future. I do feel and share your hopes and sufferings which I read in your eyes. During these 12 years of ministry as the successor of Don Bosco, I have lived many unforgettable moments with you, such as the World Youth Day in Sydney, in Madrid, in Rio de Janeiro, and at the various meetings of the Salesian Youth Movement in the Provinces, Youth Fests, and camps at Colle Don Bosco and many other places. They were indeed intense moments of the touch of the Holy Spirit, of experiencing our spirit of communion and spirituality. They were also moments of true sharing and brotherhood which have made us grow together in our love for Jesus, the Church, and Don Bosco.

Thank you, my dear young people, for your presence which reveals the love of God, for the freshness and the enthusiasm you have shared in these meetings and for the joy that you have given me. With a father's heart I will continue to love you and I want to invite you to face your future with hope. God does not abandon us, but continues to give us many strong signs of his love.

## ***Pope Francis - a sign of God's love for His Church***

With great joy and amazement we witness today a new springtime announced for the Church and for the world itself. The prophets of doom who predicted the winter and the decadence of the Church, today are forced to rethink. This new breeze, a gift of the Holy Spirit, has found expression in the face and the heart of Pope Francis. His humble, simple and smiling presence reveals his interior life. He is a highly integrated person and his gestures, attitudes and thoughts are all focussed on the Lord Jesus, the Word of God who is the embodiment of goodness, tenderness and mercy.

We are struck intensely by this Pope, so sweet and at the same time, a rock-like person whose values, moral strength, freedom of speech and action and his enlightening prophetism are solidly anchored on a convergent point. This unifying point of his person is also a dream and a project of the largest scale.

What is this dream that has attracted Pope Francis and is contagiously attracting so many young people? It is the vision of a Church free from spiritual worldliness, and the temptation to retreat into its institutional enclosure; a Church free from bourgeois mentality, inward looking narcissism, clericalism and male chauvinism. It is a Church that is truly incarnated in this world, shining in the poor and the suffering people as an open home for all humanity. In his heart there is a great desire to make it a Church that welcomes everyone, irrespective of the diversity of cultures, races, traditions and religious beliefs, a Church that goes out on the streets to evangelize and to serve, reaching out to the geographical, cultural and existential peripheries. It is a poor Church, which privileges the poor, making their voices heard, to overcome the selfish indifference of those who have plenty but are unwilling to share. He dreams of a Church that gives due importance to women without whom the church herself would risk infertility.

Pope Francis is passionately dedicated to this dream and he wants all believers, especially the young people, to live the same dream with missionary zeal. You young people are the indispensable heroes of this new spring. To get out of a use-and-throw culture that marginalizes and paralyzes you with no future, you have to set your hearts on fire, and passionately invest your energies again in your own lives. This implies that you strive for positive, noble causes of great moral values, for which it is worth expending your life. Pope Francis and Don Bosco ask this of you. I too, in this my last message, give you this as my testament to treasure in your hearts and to accomplish in your lives.

***Your youth, a gift to donate to others***

In these years I have invited you to treat your youth as a precious gift, and to direct your life according to a clear vocation plan. During my meetings and celebrations with you, I have seen clearly the great quest and longing for happiness in your faces. The Christian faith is the real answer to your desire, because it alone is the message of fundamental happiness, the promise and the gift of "life eternal".

Drawing on the Salesian spirituality implies entering into the very heart of Don Bosco, where commitment and joy go together, and where holiness and happiness are inseparable. From the beginning of my ministry, I have proposed to you a very simple, cheerful and serene holiness. The Salesian Youth Spirituality aims to help you to meet and establish a friendship of trust with Jesus Christ. I have always maintained that the Church is the right place chosen by Christ for meeting him and listening to His Word. Only his discreet presence can stimulate your freedom and educate your mind, heart and will. A wee sign of trust from you is enough for him to tell you tenderly: "Come and stay with me, you who are thirsty and hungry for happiness and true good things that make life grow. Come, you who are tired, discouraged and depressed, you who suffer in your body, in your spirit and in the depths of your heart."

Listen, my dear young people, to His words which come into you with a gentle consolation. In the Eucharist they become your own flesh and blood giving you new life. It is a new life that is nourished by prayer, fellowship and service. Its a new life understood and lived as a vocation, mission, faithful dedication and total availability to others. Listen to the heartfelt appeal of Pope Francis to the whole Church: "Let us go out, go out to offer to everyone the life of Jesus Christ!" How could you resist this call? It's an appeal that contains the same intensity and the passion of the "*Da mihi animas*," of Don Bosco. Your youthful generosity cannot but exult and passionately embrace this appeal, by getting rid of a weak and shrinking faith that cripples all energy needed for a witnessing life.

You are called to live a faith that manifests itself as prophecy, as the certainty of being loved by God so as to make him your only security. In his name you can risk all, without letting yourselves be intimidated by anything or anyone, without being influenced by other attractions of the world and without settling down for a mediocre life.

The invitation of Pope Francis for you is to go out without fear to serve the world, to enrich it with the gift of Christ and his Gospel. He places his confidence in you for really changing the world, because the Risen Jesus is with you, all the time and until the end of time, and makes all things new. "An authentic faith always implies a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values and to leave something better after our passage on the earth "(EG, 183).

Most beloved young people,

As I take leave of you, I entrust you with these words flowing from my fatherly heart. I have always loved you and will continue to do so and remind you to Jesus, your friend and mine. So I wish to make my own the words of our beloved Don Bosco: "Unto my last breath, my life will be for you, my dear young people!" . I also ask you for your prayers that I may continue to serve the Church and the Salesian Family with fidelity and love.

I entrust you to Mary Our Help, the model of holiness, who lived her life with consistency and completeness as the star of new evangelization. May she always accompany you with her maternal tenderness in all the moments of your life. May she transform you into beautiful witnesses of communion, of service, of generous and ardent faith, of justice and of love for the poor, so that, the joy of the Gospel message may reach all of the young people and that no corner of the world may be deprived of its light.

Always yours in Don Bosco,

Valdocco, 31 January 2014

*Fr. Pascual Chávez V., sdb*

Rector Major