

**HOMILY BY ARCHBISHOP CESARE NOSIGLIA, ARCHBISHOP OF TURIN  
AT THE MASS WITH SALESIAN CHAPTER MEMBERS**

*Turin, Consolata Sanctuary, 24 February 2014*

Dear General Chapter confreres,

Here we are at Our Blessed Lady's feet, thanking her for having guided us with her motherly goodness to the point where we are beginning the work of the Chapter with a pilgrimage to the Salesian places, and which began from the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. Thus, Mary has been at the beginning and will be at the end of the road taken under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I am sure that over these intense days you have experienced the kindness of our Heavenly Mother to whom St John Bosco was so devoted, and whom he considered as one of his three great and untiring loves, the other two being the Eucharist and the Pope.

We are practically in the year when the Jubilee of birth of the saintly Father, teacher and friend of youth will begin. It will see us all, Salesians and the Archdiocese of Turin, involved in meditating on the great gift this land received from God, who has raised up a numerous band of Saints and Blesseds including Don Bosco. It will be an extraordinary year that we wish to live in faith and gratitude to the Lord and with a commitment to welcoming the Saint's teaching and testimony, making our own his keen and profound insights into education, spirituality and pastoral work. The pilgrimage of the Relic was an excellent prelude to the Jubilee celebrations in 2015, because it involved so many people who in every country sought to honour the Lord through Don Bosco and pray before the Saint's relics.

This is why we have also decided to offer the many pilgrims who will come to Turin an extraordinary showing of the Shroud, the cloth which according to tradition Jesus' body in the Sepulchre was wrapped in. The fact that this display will take place in the Jubilee year of St John Bosco commits us to encouraging the world of the young through particular events and initiatives so they can discover the spiritual wealth of the Saint, Father, teacher and friend of youth on the one hand and on the other be accompanied in meditating and praying before the Shroud. This way they can see the most meaningful significance of the Icon of Holy Saturday and the message of hope and love it offers every human being. The fact that Pope Francis is coming will certainly be one of the most important and significant occasions in the jubilee year especially for the Salesian Youth Movement around the world, and for all similar groups in dioceses, parishes, and youth groups it will be a powerful opportunity to renew their faith at the school of Don Bosco, by following his teachings and his fruitful testimony of holiness.

The Saint's message is as modern and relevant as ever and still attracts so many young people, arousing their interest and encouraging them to get to know this Saint, their protector, accept his teachings and establish a relationship of real love and joy with him. Today we live in a world of rapid and tumultuous change which is putting aside so many of the certainties and rules we shared in the past while opening new and unforeseen scenarios including for young people, open by nature to new things which appeal to their future. Well then, I believe that Don Bosco's example can help us understand that also and especially in young people in particular, who might seem to be less interested or involved in discussion on faith, Jesus or the Church, there are still questions underneath it all, often unexpressed but real and concrete needs, as they seek meaning in life, the future, and in the final analysis are also seeking God.

When as a child in my home town, Campo Ligure I used sing "Don Bosco ritorna tra i giovani ancor", or when I attended the school run by the Salesian Sisters and watched the filmstrips on Don Bosco with much interest every Sunday, it seemed to me that the Saint

was truly there amongst us kids. I confess that last month, too, when we bore the Casket in procession with so many young people from Turin, I felt the compelling prayer of this hymn within me and heard it as a stimulus asking me, as bishop and pastor of the Church in Turin: are we capable of returning to throwing ourselves amidst the young to listen to their criticisms and expectations regarding the Church and the joy of finding ourselves all there together on the journey in the same faith and love?

It is a case on the one hand of forming all young people who frequent our places to have a missionary outlook as a more courageous point of reference for proposing life styles and proclaiming Christ outside the usual occasions and Church places; and on the other hand it is a case of preparing teams of young people and young adults to tackle the challenge of an "oratorian presence" – in the sense of being attached to an oratory – in the social fabric of places (or "non-places", as sociologists today call them) and youthful experiences: the town square and streets, amusements spots, sports and leisure places, supermarkets and so on. These are the new areopagi today where the word of friendship and the connected but more demanding one of Christian proclamation must be heard.

The Church cannot content itself with waiting for young people to come back to it, but has to open its doors, go out into the deep, challenge the storms be they cultural or environmental, digital or media encouraged ... In short, the new world where young people are like fish in water.

Dear friends,

You have many experiences of the world of the young with its various characteristics which differ from country to country, with its own culture, religious drive and specific social customs. I believe that Don Bosco is a universal and always contemporary Saint because he knew how to interpret and respond to the young, read their hearts and minds as young people, and this is why his teaching is still modern today and accepted by those who get to know it or have experience of it. His preventive method does not find its place in the technical field but in the relational one, as the key foundation for education of every individual who finds in Jesus Christ the fullness of a new, attractive humanity which every young person is in expectation of.

Don Bosco does not only speak to young people today, however, but also to educators, teachers: he is model, teacher and guide for every adult who wants to be a good parent, teacher, animator, priest, or leader of a group, association or religious or civil community. This is why the figure and work of Don Bosco is as relevant as ever for reawakening the sense of responsibility in all adults, whom he asks to be consistent witnesses of ethical, spiritual and civic virtues. These they are to pass on through sincere relationships and open dialogue with the new generations, thus helping to overcome the gap often created and which prevents us from listening, understanding and establishing calm and constructive relationships in family and society.

Don Bosco is also a teacher for the Church, encouraging it to change its approach to the young and their problems in life. He helps us to understand that it is not only the young who must return to the Church; it is rather the Church that must return to the young. It has to open its doors to everyone: the doors of its heart, above all, and of its spiritual and human motherliness. Perhaps then we will consider that even with the young people considered to be furthest from us, estranged, there is a better field of work than we thought: a field for listening and being in harmony with the message and witness of the Gospel.

I would like, finally, to greet and thank Fr Pascual Chavez for his friendship and the kindness he has always shown in the encounters I have had with him. May the Lord repay him for the tireless and generous service he has given even amidst not a few health problems.

To all of you my dear confreres, I wish a happy return to your Churches and communities enriched by the experience of communion and fraternity you will have in the coming days. Hopefully we can meet up again in the circumstances of the Jubilee and lift up to God, along with Our Lady of Consolation and Help of Christians, our prayer of praise and thanksgiving for what He has wrought by raising up in his Church the figure and work of St John Bosco.