

DIREZIONE GENERALE OPERE DON BOSCO

Via della Pisana 1111-00163 Rome

The Rector Major

MESSAGE TO YOUNG PEOPLE OF SYM 2015

On the Feast of Don Bosco

**"I WRITE TO YOU, YOUNG PEOPLE, BECAUSE YOU ARE STRONG
AND THE WORD OF GOD ABIDES IN YOU "(1 Jn 2:14)**

My dear young people:

This is the first time I have the opportunity as Rector Major to write to the SYM all over the world, on the occasion of the great feast of Don Bosco. It is even more special this year because we are celebrating the bicentenary of his birth.

It is with great pleasure that I continue the tradition started in recent years by the Rector Major Emeritus, Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva. It is a beautiful tradition and a wonderful opportunity to be in communication with you in all parts of our Salesian world. I have chosen as the title of this message the beautiful and powerful words we read in the First Letter of St. John:

*"I write to you, young people,
because you are strong
and the Word of God
abides in you."(1 Jn 2:14)*

The reason for this choice is that it seems to me a beautiful expression of the call that the Lord Jesus extends to each of you today, and which no doubt Don Bosco, with his skill as an educator, would be able to translate into a challenge for the daily life of his young people.

My dear young people, I cannot hide from you my deep conviction that the Lord, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the Father, is the authentic way to true happiness for each and every one of you.

As Pope said Francis to you young people:¹

"Jesus invites us to follow him, to walk with Him the path of love, the only path that leads to eternal life.

It is not an easy path, but the Lord gives us his grace, and never leaves us alone ...

If we open the door to Jesus, if we allow God to be present in our lives, if we share with Him our joys and sufferings,

we will experience a peace and joy that only God, in his infinite love, can give."

1. I write to you, because you are strong

My dear young people, this is an affirmation of God's Word. It is far from being flattery or an empty word. It is a statement that expresses fully how our God, in his love, has the certainty that you are a guarantee for the Kingdom and for a more just and fraternal humanity.

The assurance that it will be so lies in the adherence of each of us, each of you, to the Lord Jesus, to Jesus Christ. In truth, my friends, he will never be a stranger if you give him a space in your heart. He is, and will be for you, the fullest expression of love and the "human face of God" who desires your happiness, the happiness of each and every one of you, and who intervenes to help you to grow.

Our beloved Don Bosco concretized this call of the Lord for each of his young people, as he would today for you, helping you to make a valuable journey of faith, which will enable you to experience in a very real way the love of God in your lives.

¹ Message of Pope Francis for the 29th World Youth Day (2014)

Don Bosco believed blindly and totally in young people. He made his own the concerns, hopes and joys of his young people (and yours). He lived among his young people, in their midst and with them. He was a man with a special gift for personal relationships and a good way of dealing with people in friendship and dialogue. He had total confidence in the young people to be really "strong" in the journey of life, strong in faith, believing truly in their own abilities and possibilities, believing that you can and must take full responsibility for your lives, because the Lord asks it of you.

2. Allow us to journey with you, among you and by your side.

Don Bosco discovered very powerfully the infinite fatherhood of God and in freedom he allowed the Spirit to form in him the heart of a father for his children, a heart full of confidence and gratitude, which led him to give everything and give himself totally for his young people. He had a heart like that of Jesus the Good Shepherd, attracted in a special way to the poor and the little ones.

Like Don Bosco, all of us today who form part of the great tree that is the Salesian Family, would like to walk with you, among you and by your side, renewing our friendship, following a path that brings us all together, to be "strong" as the Word of God asks of us, and to journey together towards the ideals of the real project of every man or woman, the one that Jesus has shown us.

This journeying together means that we educate each other, each one of us offering the gift that we are. It means that we all commit ourselves to undertaking this journey and to continue to grow, with attention, sympathy and concern for each other. We share the yearnings, hopes and desires that give meaning to your young lives, and ours. It is our response to the invitation of the Lord to be his disciples, an invitation that is always relevant and constantly renewed.

This means being young people of today, believers, disciples and missionaries of Jesus, as Pope Francis asks of us. I invite you, dear young

people, to drink from the fountain of Salesian spirituality, which will lead us to Jesus, in a practical way close to the heart of Don Bosco.

This spirituality, in the footsteps of Don Bosco, attracts young people beyond the person of Don Bosco to God. This is the desire of the pastoral heart of all of us who want to journey with you, at your side. Put all your trust in the faith and conviction that Jesus of Nazareth offers all of us a path that leads to the fullness of life.

This Salesian youth spirituality, that we resolve to discover and live together, is a spirituality of everyday life, a life that is inspired by Jesus Christ. He is the person in whom you, dear young people, recognize the presence of God and find your own personal fulfilment

It is a spirituality of joy and optimism. It does not refuse effort and responsibility, but looks at life with hope.

It is a spirituality of friendship with Jesus the Lord, and in communion with the Church, it offers the opportunity to grow and mature in the faith.

Finally, it is a spirituality of service and the giving of self to others in daily life and in simplicity.

This is the Salesian way of living, based on a belief that is both joyful and fundamental, *that we meet the Lord, day after day, in ordinary everyday life.*

I end these words, my dearly beloved young people, saying to you what soon I will say to Mary, Help of Christians here in Valdocco. I entrust you to her. From my heart I will make this my intention and my thought for each one of you, even though I do not know you all. I have no doubt that our Mother Mary will accompany you with her tender love and help you on this journey to an encounter with the Lord and with other young people, and also with those who need you.

With great affection,

Ángel Fernández Artime

Rector Major

With lots of love.

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