

MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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I DREAM OF A SALESIAN FAMILY WHICH LIVES THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

Let us know how to live in such a way as to show that we are, as educators and evangelizers, on fire for the good of the young and collaborators in God's Plans.

My dear Salesian Family, my friends, spread throughout the world,

I carry five dreams in my heart. They are dreams which I believe are among the most beautiful fruits of the Bicentenary of Don Bosco's birth. One of these dreams, the fourth, is the one about a Salesian Family which lives *the joy of the Gospel* because it is convinced that it must be one composed of evangelizers and educators to our Faith – in every corner of the world where the Family is found.

I wish to remind you of the words with which Pope Francis begins his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*: "The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew."

The Holy Father is inviting every Christian to renew his or her personal encounter with Jesus or to allow himself to "be encountered" by Him, to oppose the risk of feeling lonely, or of keeping a rhythm of life which only ends up in an oppressive whirlwind, leaving no room for others or for true interpersonal relationships.

This is an enormously real and great challenge for us, Salesian Family, who must bring into the Church that gift which is uniquely ours: the powerful and irresistible charism which we have inherited from Don Bosco.

Why this dream? Because I truly would not wish to see Don Vecchi's words, which he spoke in reference to the primacy of evangelization, become prophetic: "It can happen that under the pressure of a multitude of activities, concerned about structures and busy about organization, we run the risk

of losing sight of the horizon of our activity and appearing like so many activists or grass-roots theorists, managers of works or structures, admirable benefactors but poor as explicit witnesses to Christ, mediators of his saving work, formers of souls, and guides in the life of grace.” (AGC, no. 373)

It is part of our DNA, of our most authentic essence, inherited from Don Bosco, to be evangelizers of the young, especially of the poorest of them.” This is so, moreover, because we truly believe that God is awaiting us in the young to offer us the grace of an encounter with Him. He expects us to be *true servants of the young* to serve Him in them by recognizing their dignity and by educating them to the fullness of life.

Those persons who live this reality profoundly taste the true joy of the Gospel. This is an existence which is very different from the ones of those who, as Pope Francis says in paragraph six of *Evangelii Gaudium*, are Christians who seem to live a lifestyle of an “Easterless” Lent.

My dear friends, if we live with Don Bosco’s sensitivity and drink from the source of his charism, we cannot allow ourselves to fall into the temptation of pessimism or of a lack of joyous satisfaction. Certainly, we must face difficulties, but it is much more beautiful to animate every person in our Groups to go forward by giving the best of themselves and of what we are; i.e., to show by our lives that we are educators and evangelizers, *on fire for the good of the young and collaborators in “God’s Plans”*. We also need to show that we want to continue making this dream of Don Bosco become a reality, with the same enthusiasm with which he succeeded in handing it on to his first Salesians and laity, and to do so together with our brother Salesians, within our Salesian Family, and with the many educators, friends, and laity involved in this work. In this way we may merit the title given us by Paul VI when he called us “missionaries to the young.”

To be missionaries in life means, first of all, to believe that Jesus is the center of one’s life. This signifies that we must truly believe that our life is enriched when we give of ourselves, when we give ourselves up for others, and that, on the contrary, it is weakened and saddened by isolating ourselves or when seeking only our own comfort. It also means that we believe that the most beautiful life is one in which happiness is found by making others happy and by giving life to them. “And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervour, who have first received the joy of Christ.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, paragraph 10)

My dear friends, this is the heart, the core, of my dream for a Salesian Family which must feel that it is more alive than ever before and that it has the ecclesial duty to offer the best of itself so as to give freely what was received freely – as Jesus tells us in the Gospel.

My most beautiful wish is that our faces might always reflect this joy about which we dream and that comes only from Him.