

MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

DON ÁNGEL FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME

WE BELIEVE IN YOU, DEAR YOUNG PEOPLE

My heart is still filled with joy over the friendliness of the young, their genuine joy, and their extraordinary capacity to adapt themselves in any situation – whether pleasant or unpleasant – all with a smile on their lips.

I am convinced yet again that our young people, the youth of the world, these young people are truly wise and impassioned and that they have much to offer us and even to teach us.

My dear friends, readers of the *Salesian Bulletin*,

In this message, after having experience World Youth Day in Krakow, I feel almost obligated to speak in an enthusiastic way of young people.

This was a gathering of young people coming from many countries of the world, and it created an echo around the world, certainly if only because of the aura of love and interest surrounding Pope Francis. But, in this case, a special resonance came from the 600,000 young people present at all moments (catechesis and celebrations) of WYD. In addition to this, more than 2,000,000 people were present for Holy Mass that Sunday.

The day that was most precious to me and to so many of us educators and friends of the young was the gathering held the day before, when almost 6,000 young people from Salesian Houses of fifty-two nations participated. Many others would have been there but were unable to receive permission or the visas necessary to make the trip, or they encountered other difficulties which impeded them from seeing their beautiful dream come true.

Meeting together with the young who belong to the Salesian Youth Movement of the world was a gift – and one filled with affection and deep satisfaction to every Salesian heart. We were able to dialogue and reflect, celebrate Mass, and share meals as a family – a rather large, but still, a true family – and to spend an “oratorian” evening together in the style of those evenings at Valdocco with Don Bosco or at Mornese with Mother Mazzarello.

We finished the day with our common prayers and a wonderful Salesian “Good Night.”

The following days saw a springtime – a flowering of youthful festivity and vitality. In the midst of all the strict security measures, rivers of young people of all colors, races, and nations moved through the city of Krakow, speaking the most disparate languages and yet in an almost miraculous way made themselves understood and managed to understand the others – all brought about through one single, extraordinary motivation: faith.

To my mind, the greater part of the young people was moved by this one important, great, and strong motivation. These young people wanted to live their faith and show that they are believing young Christians, together with the other young people from around the world, and accompanied by many educators, religious, priests, and bishops, who numbered 850. Giving unity and meaning to this call was the figure of Pope Francis, his message, the shared prayer, and the faith celebrated together with him.

Among the many things that I could stress, the most significant for me and that which fixed these days in my memory is this conviction: the firm decision that we must always continue to believe ever more in young people.

I was very impressed by the silence during the moments of prayer and the authentically prayerful attitude of that sea of young people.

It was quite surprising that during all those days I did not hear even one protest or complaint nor did I see any unpleasant gesture, despite the fact that we were under the sun, often a baking one, or caught in a thunderous downpour. This was a witness to fraternity and living in communion in diversity – and a vital lesson educating to universal peace.

My heart is still filled with joy over the friendliness of the young, their genuine joy, and their extraordinary capacity to adapt themselves in any situation – whether pleasant or unpleasant – all with a smile on their lips.

I am convinced yet again that our young people, the youth of the world, these young people are truly wise and impassioned and that they have much to offer us and even to teach us.

This is why the living echo of the marvelous trust that Don Bosco had in the young still resounds in my heart. He experienced this with the boys of Valdocco and would be totally fascinated with today's youth on every continent. I feel within me, more strongly than ever, the firm conviction that Don Bosco had, which reminds us that in every boy or girl there are precious seeds of goodness. They are all worthy of our dedication and total self-giving. And I am ever more convinced of what I say so very often to the young people all over the Salesian world whenever I meet with them: **do not renounce your dreams!** May they be the protagonists of their lives and realize their dreams. May they have faith in themselves and in God, as we have in them. May they feel that we love them and we want to see them happy both here and in eternity, as Don Bosco used to say.

I thank you for your life, dear young people, in the name of the entire Salesian Family around the world and of the adults of our wounded and bleeding world. We have faith in you. We believe in you. We need you. The world needs you. God, who has dreamed of an ever more beautiful world formed through man's action, NEEDS YOU.

With affection,
Your Don Ángel, Rector Major