

THE MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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“DON BOSCO TAUGHT US THAT GOD WANTS US ALWAYS TO BE HAPPY”



It is most certain that Don Bosco is alive today, alive in so many different realities where thousands and thousands of people carry his dream forward, in the name of Jesus. And he is still alive because he continues to be their inspiration.

Dearest friends, many things have happened during this past month and a half. (It is the end of November as I write this January greeting to all of you, but I have firmly in mind the month of Don Bosco.) In October and November, I spent 14 very intense and beautiful days in Brazil – in São Paulo and Recife. The 11 spent days in India – in Bangalore, Guwahati, Assam, and Mumbai – as well as the 10 days spent in Angola and Mozambique were very special, too.

Today in Matola, while we were bidding farewell in a very simple and humble place, celebrating Sunday Mass with 200 adults and children – many of whom were shoeless and not wearing their “Sunday best” because they do not have any – one of them, in the name of everyone, read this “thank you” message that I transcribe below for you. I found it sweetest when she said it was a message that was not intended for me alone.

It was a message so full of life that it raised my thoughts to something very certain: by God’s grace, **Don Bosco is still very much alive in all parts of the world.**

This is what that little 12-year-old girl read:

- At this moment during Holy Mass, we give thanks to the Lord and to you, Don Angel. Your presence has helped us celebrate life and friendship. Our hearts have swelled while celebrating with you who carry many children and young people from all over the world in your heart. Dear Don Angel, father and friend, thank you for having celebrated with us. May the Lord bless you, wherever you may be. We will pray for you, and we know that you will never stop praying for us. We would love to travel with you and help you in your work, but you know very well that we have to study hard, help in our homes, and prepare ourselves so we may do much good for many people. One day, when you return, we will have more time to show you all the good that we have discovered and that we have done. **Don Bosco taught us that God wants us always to be happy** and to do all our duties well. Bring with you a hug from us to all the children of the world. Wherever you may be, you will feel in your heart our friendship becoming prayer for you, and our joy becoming peace when you feel tired. **Carry us in your hearts for we, in ours, are already with you.** Sing with us this song, Don Angel, for this is what God wants of us, *I am happy because Jesus wants me to be.*

There ends the message which I received from all the boys and girls accompanied by their youth leaders.

They contemplated me as I contemplated them, and I said to myself once again that we Salesians and our Salesian Family around the world truly were born for them – for the poorest and simplest. It is here where we feel best and where we help others feel their best. And I was thinking of the thousands of little boys, girls, teens, and young adults whom I have come to know in this past month and a half during my travels – and that all of them, no matter what their culture or customs, all said the same thing.

“I have a future. Nothing is lost. I am here, and I have a future. I have a future.”

I also thought that it is most certain that Don Bosco is alive today, alive in so many different realities where thousands and thousands of people carry his dream forward, in the name of Jesus. And he is still alive because he continues to be their inspiration.

As I write these lines now, something else comes to mind that completely confirms what I have been saying. One week earlier, I was visiting one of our houses in Luanda, Angola, where they take in street children. That day there were 42 – of whom the most recent arrival had come in only one week prior; the “veteran” had been there for five years. The youngest, the “Benjamin,” is six years old. One of them, who had a great gift for singing rap, composed a song for the visit. Its words were: “I have a future. Nothing is lost. I am here, and I have a future. I have a future.” This boy had already spent two years on the streets when Divine Providence willed that we should make contact with him. Looking at them, with a heart filled with emotion, I said to myself: Don Bosco lives! In this house and in every one of my brother Salesians and in the lay educators who today welcome these children with word, gaze, and open arms as so many friends, brothers, and fathers, Don Bosco lives!

That little girl in Matola was right when she asked me to carry them in my heart. I cannot but carry them in my heart after having gotten to know them. And, just like me, so do you, my dear friends and very good people who continue to believe that together we can do much good, in a world in which many do not trust anything or anyone.

I can assure you that what I share with you is life itself, as St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta said. For every poor person whom we encounter – and I say this in her name – for every little boy, little girl, adolescent, and young adult whom we encounter, that meeting is not only not indifferent but can change their lives for the good.

Therefore, thanks be to our Good God for such beauty. Thanks be to our Good God for them, the smallest and simplest, who count for nothing in this world but who continue to do us so much good. In Don Bosco’s name, “Thanks!”

