

## ***Lesson 18 – The Preventive System (Session 2)***

### **Objectives**

1. To see how Don Bosco used reason, religion, and kindness with his boys.
2. To reflect on how the Cooperator can put reason, religion, and kindness into practice in daily life, family, work situations, and the apostolate.
3. To understand Don Bosco's adage "It is not enough to love the boys. They must know they are loved."
4. To reflect on how the Preventive System can be used with today's youth.

*Reference: Reason, Religion and Kindness: The Educational Method of St. John Bosco – Paul Avallone, SDB, 3rd ed. (New Rochelle: Don Bosco Publications, 1979), pp. 32, 70-72*

### **Fundamental Principles of this System**

In the words of St. John Bosco himself, "This system is based entirely on reason, religion, and kindness." He insisted that reason and religion are to be practiced first by every teacher and then made an integral part of one's educational effort if the teacher wishes to be obeyed and to be successful.

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The first element in the Salesian educational system is *reason*: the power to comprehend and understand the young and at the same time the ability to dialogue and communicate with them. This calls for an active and constant presence of the educator with the educand; a pleasant and unrestrained "being together." Efforts are made to supply the legitimate emotional and psychological needs of the young, who seek "to belong," "to be secure" and "to be recognized."

Belongingness, security, and recognition are attained in this system of education by the confidence generated through this interpersonal relationship between pupils and teachers who, in Don Bosco's words, are like "loving fathers" encouraging and praising at the proper moment. The needs for attention and recognition are fulfilled by wholesome outlets; sports, music, dramatics, field trips, and countless number of school activities.

Don Bosco placed great emphasis on the second factor of the Salesian educational triangle: *religion*: The message of the Gospel is an integral part of Salesian education, since the "good news" is light that will lead individuals safely through the life of this world to the life in the next.

The means of saving the young is and ever will be religion, which will dominate the actions of the young and effect permanent change for the good of the "individual and that of society." Salesian education, drawing always from authentic Catholic tradition, places great importance on the frequent use of the sacraments – the ordinary channels of God's grace and help; indeed, the young need such help in the period of adolescence, a perplexing and confusing time of life.

To reason and religion, the Salesian educator adds *kindness* to complete the educational triangle. This basic principle is not a weakness, but rather a show of strength and self-control. It seeks to create a persuasive atmosphere, where self-expression is fostered. This kindness or charity generates that expansiveness and confidence so much needed by today's youth.

The Preventive System stems from the Gospel of Christ, who is meekness, kindness, and love. This method is based on the golden words of St. Paul when he extols the great virtue of charity: "Charity is patient, is kind. It bears all things, hopes all things and endures all things."

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 2, Article 10*

## **The Pedagogy of Goodness**

In their educational task, Salesian Cooperators:

1. put into practice Don Bosco's Preventive System, a spiritual and educative experience which is based on reason, religion, and loving kindness,
2. foster a family environment in which constant dialogue, an animating presence, personal accompaniment, and group experience help all perceive God's presence,
3. promote the good and educate to a love for life, to responsibility, solidarity, sharing, synergy, and communion,
4. appeal to a person's inner resources and believe in the invisible action of grace. They look at each young person with realistic optimism, convinced of the educational value of the faith experience. Their relationship with the young is inspired by a mature and welcoming love.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 3, Article 18*

## **Style of Relationship**

Salesian Cooperators, taking their inspiration from the Preventive System of Don Bosco, practice loving kindness in their relationships as a sign of the love of God and as a means to re-awaken His presence in the hearts of all those whom they meet. They are always ready to "take the first step" and to welcome others with goodness, respect, and patience. They tend to establish rapports of trust and friendship so as to create a family atmosphere of simplicity and affection. They are peace workers and seek clarification, consensus, and accord in and through dialogue.

*Reference: 1 Corinthians 13: 1-7 (RSV)*

## **The Order of Importance in Spiritual Gifts, Love**

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

## **Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 145-147.*

## **Lesson 18: The Preventive System (Session 2) – Questions for Reflection**

1. Don Bosco had said that only a Christian can apply the Preventive System with success. Why do you believe this to be true?

2. As a Cooperator how can you practice the loving kindness desired by Don Bosco in your relationships.

3. How do you see love as patient, kind, never jealous, never boastful, never conceited, never rude or selfish? How would you apply this to your life?

4. How do you see love as not taking offense and not being resentful? How would you apply this to your life?

### **Prayer Experience**

Practice the spirit of loving kindness with those whom you find unlovable.

## **Dominic's Final Days**

For the first four days at home, Dominic was doing well and did not remain in bed. Then he became weaker, his appetite failed, and his cough became worse. Upon examination by the doctor, it was found that the boy's illness was much worse than it seemed. Thinking that Dominic had an infection, the doctor used the accepted remedy of the time: bleeding. Dominic was bled several times. He seemed to rally.

Dominic asked to have the priest hear his confession, however, and to give him Communion. This request pained his parents, but to please him they called in the pastor, who confessed him and gave him Viaticum. Dominic then recalled the resolutions at his first Communion. Several times he repeated, "Jesus, Mary! Yes, you will always be my friends! I say it again and again – death but not sin!"

After four days, the doctor had good news for the parents. "Thank God," he said. "We are past danger. The sickness is beaten. All he needs now is rest."

They were overjoyed at the news. Dominic smiled and said, "The world is beaten. All I need now is a careful appearance before God!"

After the doctor left, without being misled by the good news Dominic asked for the Anointing of the Sick. To please him, his parents agreed. On being anointed he prayed: "My God, forgive me my sins. I love you and I want to love you forever. May this sacrament, which you are letting me receive in your infinite mercy, cancel all the sins I have committed by sight and hearing, by my mouth, hands, and feet. May my body and soul be sanctified by the merits of your holy passion! Amen." Dominic's mind was so clear and his voice so loud, that one would think he was just fine.

## **Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant**

It was the night of March 9, the last day of Dominic's life. He had been bled ten times, and other remedies had been tried. He was so very weak. The Papal Blessing was given to him. He was deeply consoled on realizing that he was receiving the Pope's blessing and a plenary indulgence. He kept repeating, "Thanks be to God!"

No one but Dominic himself could have suspected he was so close to death. An hour and a half before he died, the pastor came to see him, and, noting how calmly he rested, was surprised to hear him recommend his soul to God. The boy kept praying in long, drawn-out sighs, showing how anxious he was to go swiftly to eternity. After reciting a few prayers with Dominic, the pastor turned to leave.

"Please, Father," called Dominic, "give me a little remembrance before you go."

"What remembrance can I leave you?"

"A word of comfort!"

"I know of nothing better than to recall the Passion of Christ."

"Thanks be to God!" Dominic answered.

He then opened his eyes, looked at his parents, and gasped, "Dad, it's time! Take my prayer book and read for me the prayers for a good death!"

For a while he seemed to be resting. Then slowly he awoke. Smiling, he said clearly, "Good-bye, Dad, good-bye! The pastor wanted to tell me something else, but I can't remember.... Oh, what a beautiful sight I see!"

This detailed account of Dominic's last days and his edifying death is not pious embellishment. The one who kept the Oratory informed, wrote Father Michael Rua, was Dominic's pastor.

## **Visions Beautiful**

Soon after his death, Dominic appeared to his distraught father. After verifying that it was his son, Charles Savio said, "Oh, my dear boy! How wonderful you look! Why, I scarcely know what to say! Are you in Heaven?"

"Yes, Dad, I am in Heaven."

"Will you pray for us, for mother and me?"

"Yes, I will pray for you!"

With that the vision faded.

But the most breathtaking apparition of Dominic was granted to Don Bosco on the night of December 6, 1876, nineteen years after Dominic's death. The youth appeared radiant in glory to encourage and advise Don Bosco about the future of his work for boys. In that vision Don Bosco asked his pupil, "Dominic, what gave you the most comfort at the hour of death?"

Back came the answer: "What comforted me most at the point of death was the assistance of the powerful and loving Mother of God." Very likely that is what caused the joyful outburst, "Oh, what a beautiful sight I see."

March 5 of the Holy Year 1950 saw the glorious beatification of Dominic Savio by Pope Pius XII. It is a curious coincidence that March 5, 1950, was the second Sunday of Lent; it had been on the second Sunday of Lent, 1855, that St. John Bosco gave the boys at the Oratory, including Dominic Savio, the sermon on how easy it is to become a saint. Full recognition of Dominic Savio's holiness came on June 12, 1954. On that day, in ceremonies held at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Dominic was canonized a saint of the Church.

Popes have said that Dominic Savio is a providential patron for our youth, particularly during the dangerous years of pre-adolescence and early adolescence. If our boys and girls can be preserved and strengthened during these difficult and important years, they will more surely be preserved during their later teens. This is Dominic's unique and God-given mission for youth.

DEATH BUT NOT SIN! That was Dominic's lifelong motto. It can become the battle cry of our youth today!