

Lesson 23 – Salesian Saints and Blesseds

Objectives

1. To understand that the Salesian Cooperator vocation is a way to sanctity.
2. To understand that each individual is created with his or her own unique gifts.
3. To recognize the distinguishable spiritual traits and features of the Salesian saints.
4. To understand Don Bosco's own ardent conviction that it is easy to be a saint.

Reference: Sanctity in the Salesian Family – J. Puthenkalam, SDB, and A. Mampra, SDB

Among the great spiritual families in the Church, the Salesian Family, which has Don Bosco for its founder, possesses distinctive traits and features. Don Bosco lived and transmitted to his followers a characteristic Gospel path of holiness of life, which we call Salesian spirituality. It shines most resplendently in the life and work of Don Bosco, and in those immediately connected with him in his mission toward poor and abandoned youth. In the hundred years since his death, others inspired by him have lived and expressed the same spirituality in a variety of ways and with different nuances, but with clearly recognizable affinities. This has given rise to a marvelous sprouting of Salesian sanctity in myriad forms, authenticated and confirmed by the Church. Among those whom the Church has raised to the honors of the altar in recent times, we have men, women, and young people; we find bishops, priests, religious, and lay people, martyrs, confessors, and virgins. In their number we discover missionaries who left their homelands for faraway places, apostles of the downtrodden and the sick, and men and women from all walks of life, who braved everything to give their lives to proclaim the Gospel and plant the Church.

Each saint is a masterpiece of God's grace. In each one his love, triumphing over human frailty and evil, has come to fulfillment. Each is a unique marvel. There are no two saints who are the same in every respect. Each is a splendid and extraordinary accomplishment of God's plan for salvation for him or her. At the same time, there are certain recognizable spiritual traits and features in a certain number of them, which group them together as a distinct spiritual family. For just as there are physical traits and features among members of a natural family, so too – and with greater reason – there are spiritual traits and features which group together members of the same spiritual family. Just as on the natural plane each member of a family is a unique person with his or her own very particular characteristics and also shares with the other members of the family the features and traits that distinguish that family from every other, so too on the spiritual plane each saint shines out with his or her own unique characteristics and shares with others those spiritual traits that bind him or her to a spiritual family.

They remind us that Salesian spirituality, which characterizes the Salesian Family, is first and foremost a project of holiness of life, a sanctity lived out in the ordinary run of one's duties; a cheerful and joyful sanctity that attracts the young, drawing them to virtue; a contagious sanctity that infects everyone within its radius with enthusiasm and ardor for the salvation of the young.

Joaquim D'Souza, SDB, former regional councilor, South Asia

The exemplary lives of these members of the Salesian Family provide us with a rich source of spiritual nourishment. God has created each of us with unique gifts. He has called each of us to fulfill a particular mission in life. We live and work in differing historic times and contexts. We respond to the Lord's call with our own strengths and weaknesses, hopes and fears. We are called to holiness. But we are not called to imitate blindly all or any one of the saints who have gone before us. The lives of these great men and women remind us that saints are not molded into some sort of monotonous uniformity. Instead, each of them is unique and, like a star, sheds light on our lives.

Sanctity calls for a creative and dynamic response to the Lord's call to be "perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect." No one can measure up fully to this challenge, but all of us can take tiny strides by drawing inspiration and strength,

light and love, faith and serenity, optimism and hope from the people who have walked the path of holiness before us. Together their example makes the path easier for us. The light they shed makes our journey less arduous.

The saints of the Salesian Family bring sanctity closer to us. Don Bosco's own ardent conviction that it is easy to be a saint helped Dominic Savio to become an outstanding model of teenage sanctity. The world today, more than at any time perhaps, looks for models and icons of sanctity. The galaxy of Salesian Family members who have been crowned with the grace of sanctity in the Church is a sure sign of the Spirit's mark of approval of Don Bosco's spirit and charisma. This rich patrimony that he has bequeathed to us can lead us, too, to sanctity.

Thomas Menamparampil, SDB, archbishop emeritus of Guwahati

Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter III, Article 20, §2-3

In Communion with Mary Help of Christians and our Saints

2. They turn with particular affection to St. Joseph, patron of the Universal Church. They have trustful recourse to the intercession of St. John Bosco, "Father and Teacher" of the young and of all the Salesian Family.

3. Among the models of apostolic life, they venerate with predilection St. Francis de Sales, St. Mary Domenica Mazzarello, Alexandrina da Costa, Mama Margaret, and all the other saints, blessed, and venerables of the Salesian Family. Knowledge of their lives is a font of inspiration and prayer.

Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry, SDB, p. 97

The tree has already provided its proofs; it has produced its fruit. *Salesian holiness is not just a plan or a hope. It really exists in the Church and has received her official recognition.* Among the saints, blessed, and those whose causes for canonization are being examined there are not only Salesian religious but also pupils (Dominic Savio, Ceferino Namuncurá, and Laura Vicuña) and Cooperators: three victims of the Spanish Civil War and Doña Dorothy Chopitea (1816-1891); in Italy, *Joseph Toniolo* (1845-1918) and *Edvige Carboni* (1880-1952); and in Portugal, *Alessandrina da Costa* (1904-1955).

The following list of Salesian saints, blessed, and venerables, is based on that of Fr. Angel Fernandez Artime in his commentary on the 2019 Strenna (December 27, 2018). He also lists 24 servants of God.

Salesian Saints

Fr. John Bosco, Father and Founder (canonized 1934)	1815-1888
Mother Mary Mazzarello, Co-Foundress of FMA (1951)	1837-1881
Dominic Savio (1954)	1842-1857
Fr. Leonard Murialdo, collaborator (1970)	1828-1900
Bishop Louis Versiglia, Salesian Protomartyr (2000)	1873-1930
Fr. Callistus Caravario, Salesian Protomartyr (2000)	1903-1930
Fr. Louis Orione, collaborator (2004)	1872-1940
Fr. Louis Guanella, ex-SDB (2011)	1842-1915

Salesian Blessed

Fr. Michael Rua (beatified 1972)	1837-1910
Laura Vicuña (1988)	1891-1904
Fr. Philip Rinaldi (1990)	1856-1931
Sr. Madeleine Morano (1994)	1847-1908
Fr. Joseph Kowalski (1999)	1912-1942

<i>Five Poznan Oratory Youths</i> (1999)	†1942
Franciszek Kesy (age 23)	
Czeslaw Jozwiak (22)	
Edward Klinik (23)	
Jarogniew Wojciechowski (20)	
Edward Kazmierski (22)	
Fr. Joseph Calasanz (and 94 Companions) (2001 and 2007)	1872-1936
Fr. Louis Variara (2002)	1875-1923
Bro. Artemides Zatti (2002)	1880-1951
Sr. Maria Romero (2002)	1902-1977
Fr. August Czartoryski (2004)	1858-1893
Sr. Eusebia Palomino (2004)	1899-1935
Alexandrina da Costa, Cooperator (2004)	1904-1955
Albert Marvelli (2004), past pupil	1918-1946
Fr. Bronislaus Markiewicz, ex-SDB (2005)	1842-1912
Ceferino Namuncurá (2007)	1886-1905
Joseph Toniolo, Cooperator (2012)	1845-1918
Sr. Maria Troncatti (2012)	1883-1969
Bro. Stephen Sandor (2013)	1914-1953
Fr. Titus Zeman (2017)	1915-1969

Salesian Venerables

Fr. Andrew Beltrami (decree 1966)	1870-1897
Sr. Teresa Valsé Pantellini (1982)	1878-1907
Dorothy Chopitea, Cooperator (1983)	1816-1891
Fr. Vincent Cimatti (1991)	1879-1965
Bro. Simon Srugi (1993)	1877-1943
Fr. Rudolph Komorek (1995)	1890-1949
Bishop Louis Olivares (2004)	1873-1943
Margaret Occhiena Bosco (2006)	1788-1856
Fr. Joseph Quadrio (2009)	1921-1963
Sr. Laura Meozzi (2011)	1873-1951
Attilio Giordani, Cooperator (2013)	1913-1972
Fr. August Arribat (2014)	1879-1963
Bp. Stephen Ferrando (2016)	1895-1978
Fr. Francis Convertini (2017)	1898-1976
Fr. Joseph Vandor (2017)	1909-1979
Bp. Octavio Ortiz Arrieta (2017)	1879-1958
Card. August Hlond (2018)	1881-1948

The Saints

In the words of Don Bosco: Let us therefore be devoted to the saints whose name we bear and have recourse to them in our spiritual and temporal needs. They will always be ready to help us.

The virtues and the actions of the saints were all oriented toward the same end, which is the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Suggested Reading

In the Footsteps of Don Bosco,

Lesson 23: Salesian Saints and Blessed – Questions for Reflection

1. What does your own devotion to your father Don Bosco consist of?
2. What kind of security is there in the fact that so many members of the Salesian Family are saints?
3. In what way does the vocation of a Salesian Cooperator appeal to you, with the understanding that this is a means of sanctity?
4. What sort of witness should the Cooperator bear?

Prayer Experience:

Seek the intercession of the Salesian saints in your daily prayer.