

Homily of the Rector Major
on 3rd Sunday of the Year
Spirituality days of Salesian Family
Salesianum, Rome
22.1.2017¹

”**Galilee of the Gentiles!** *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone.*” In this way the liturgy of the Word begins and the Gospel of Mark repeats. It is a beautiful prophecy of hope and a beautiful salesian hymn. It is the salesian heart that we have inherited from Don Bosco and from the founders of various branches of our Family.

We are called to be witnesses of the light of the Gospel, of the presence of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit, of the mercy of the Father who reaches out to all his sons and daughters. Even today there are many who live in the darkness of death, even today there are many who see only darkness within themselves.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are here to give witness of light! And we, the Salesian Family are like that of “the Galilee of the Gentiles”, that is, a real ‘place’ where Lord Jesus wants to live in the midst of his people, a place where he becomes a citizen among them, the people who came from various places, who are called to be one people, even if we come from every part of the globe.

Galilee is the "place" of Jesus from which he takes the surname. He was known as Jesus of Nazareth; Jesus, son of Joseph, and Jesus of Galilee. Later, after Easter, even as the Son of Man ...

It is nice to think that Jesus chooses to live in the midst of our Salesian Family, taking our common surname, meeting us at every step, in every corner, in every sector ... We do not forget that the Galilee is also the place where the disciples were called to see the risen Lord after the announcement of the women.

¹ Is 8,23 – 9,2; Ps 26; 1Cor 1,10-13.17; Mt 4,12-23

But Galilee is also the place of the first apostles called by Jesus. I think that even today the Lord calls us while walking on the shore inviting us: "**Follow me**", that is to say, "you are my disciples."

We cannot think of a Salesian Family which despite its weaknesses, fail to be a true constellation of groups and people fascinated by Don Bosco who become true "missionary disciples" of Jesus.

To follow Jesus means to accompany him while "(travels] **throughout Galilee, teaching ...announcing ... healing ...**"

This is our task, our rule of life: to accompany Jesus as missionary disciples in our places, teaching, announcing and healing.

These days we have reflected on being family. All of us are family, because this is a constitutive element of being human. I wish that after this meeting we can all live more intensely this unique reality and communion, because we have all been called to a life in a family and every family is unique.

And I wish that as Salesian Family, "Worldwide Galilee of the Nations", we can respond generously to Jesus' call to follow him and go with him to every corner of our homeland or mission teaching, announcing and healing.

- The first task of the pilgrim Jesus is **teaching**: For this I've invited you to be families that become schools of life and love. He teaches a person or community that has something to share. And we have much to share. In fact, our charism is strongly marked by the spirit of family. So, we are courageous to teach to live the richness of family life taking care primarily of our own families. No one can give what he does not have.
- Second: Jesus **announces**. He announces the beauty of the Gospel, of the Kingdom of God, that is revealed in the beatitudes. As Salesian Family, we are also bold in announcing the Word of Jesus aloud when possible, and always with the witness of life. Families in the world are in need of this, because only the mild burden of the Word of Jesus gives life in abundance.

- Third, the Son of the Father who is a creator and son of Mary and Joseph, **heals people**. Every day we meet so many brothers and sisters who are in need of understanding, of having faith in life, of tenderness, of a friendly supportive hand and a friendly tone that encourages them. Finally, they are in need of people who do the mediation of healing and open the doors of the heart and of the community of believers so that they can feel the warmth of home again. Today, many families in our environments need this attitude of healing! Let's go ahead! This is also our mission today!

Pope Francis teaches us every day *the way*, and gave us the *Amoris Letitia* as a guide and reference for our experience and our mission.

I conclude. Today, 22nd January, I cannot forget a little giant of our Salesian Family, the fruit of the shared mission among the first Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the first Salesians. Of course, I am talking of our dear Blessed Laura Vicuña, Chilean girl who encountered the Salesian charism in Junín de los Andes, Argentina. We are talking of the early 19th century. Therefore it was really the beginning of Salesian adventure. She herself had experienced the difficulties of family life: she lost his father very early and his mother, impoverished had to migrate and cross a very high mountain range to find a new horizon of life. But arrived in the "promised land" beyond the Andes, she faced more misfortunes and even gender violence within the family. But Laurita, this little girl from contemplative heart had found in the Salesian Sisters and Salesians a true horizon of life and salvation of every family: Jesus.

Laura knows the life of Dominic Savio and wants to be like him, living the same proposals of him which all of us know. Although very small, remember that just dies at the age of 12 and a half years, has the experience of a true spiritual friendship with a young Salesian, and a plenty of "familiar environment with the Lord of Life." It can tell that she is also the fruit of the spirit of being "together" as the Salesian Family because at that time, the house of Junín was the only house where the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the Salesians shared spaces at different times of the day . (Even today, the houses are only separated by a road).

Laura has taught us, more with her life than with her death, the way to face the hardships and difficulties experienced in the bosom of families with difficulties even today.

Let us pray that every family can be a contemplative family, missionary disciple of Jesus, heralding the joy of being a real family, home and school of life and love.

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, wife of Joseph, accompany us and help us always.