

MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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I DREAM OF A SALESIAN FAMILY

FILLED WITH FAITH AND WITH GOD

translated by Fr. Mike Mendl, SDB

This would be a wonderful fruit of the bicentennial of Don Bosco's birth, which we celebrated in the year that ended a short while ago. I dream of a Salesian Family made up of women and men, consecrated and lay, who live and are trying to live every day with a deep faith, their eyes filled by the stars and their souls filled with God.

Some months ago I wrote to my Salesian confreres that one of the most precious characteristics to which, without doubt, we must give our attention is that in many places, in many of the countries where we are working with such dedication and generosity, we're known for the generous work we do, but people don't know why we do what we do or what motivates us deep down. We're admired for our work with young people; our school system is highly esteemed, including schools for professional training and those that prepare youths for employment. Our commitment to street children is greatly respected and appreciated. Our dedication and creativity in many of our youth centers are praised. How our hostels and homes for poor kids meet today's needs draws a lot of attention, etc.

Nevertheless, often people can't describe who we are and still less why we do what we do and why we live as we do. And this is my dream, my dearly beloved Salesian Family, friends and supporters of Don Bosco and his charism: that everyone who meets us, or who comes into contact with one of our communities or with any group or branch of our extended Salesian Family might feel himself touched by the simple presence of women and men of faith, of deep and proven faith that almost without our wishing it, through the simplicity of their lives and activity, lets who we are shine through and reveals whom we belong to, because we are, above all, believers, happy to be such, knowing "how much good it does us when He once more touches our lives and impels us to share His new life! What then happens is that 'we speak of what we have seen and heard' (1 John 1:3)" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 264).

I'm firmly convinced, sisters and brothers, that this is the path that we need most today, that our world absolutely needs: the path of taking care of, nourishing, and deepening our faith, of being women and men of faith, communicating that we do all that we do *because* we feel ourselves drawn to and fascinated by Jesus, and we have freely felt the profound joy of saying yes to God the Father, who sends us as his witnesses in the midst of the human race. If we are women and men *filled with God*, we can radiate Him to those whom we meet in our daily lives.

That's how Don Bosco preached God. God is always present and alive. He's like a companion, like the air we breathe. He's like water for fish. He's like the cozy hearth of a loving home. He's like the fragrance of life.

He's what infants know, not adults. One child, enchanted as he observed some cathedral windows resplendent in the sun, suddenly exclaimed, "Now I know what a saint is." "Really?" asked the catechist. "Someone who lets the light shine through him."

Don Bosco was a splendid window allowing the light of God to shine through him. The Salesian Family must do that, as well.

To remain, love, and bear fruit

This world needs a Salesian Family whose members are capable of **remaining, loving, and bearing fruit**. These three verbs, in the context of the icon of the Vine and the Branches (John 15:1-11), invite us to pay attention to the necessity of being deeply rooted in Jesus so that we may remain strongly attached to Him, and through Him live a brotherhood that truly attracts people and leads us to serve the young and all the people to whom the diverse charismatic traits of our Family bring us.

These three verbs lead us really to give **God the first place** in our lives, never forgetting that we must be, above all else, “God-seekers” and witnesses of His Love in the midst of the young, opting for the poorest and most abandoned among them.

By their sinking into the depth of our hearts, these three verbs urge us always to dedicate ourselves more seriously to being truly wrapped up in what God is planning. We live by weaving the “fabric” that we and the Lord are creating as together *we stretch and tie together the threads of brotherhood, of respect, of eyes open to the needy and the discouraged people of this world.*

At the end of this message, I want to remind everyone that we are the **Salesian** Family and we share the tremendous charism of Don Bosco not in order to focus on ourselves but to give—and to give ourselves— and be the human gesture and expression of *God’s mercy.*