

**Last Farewell and Mementos
of St. John Bosco to his Cooperators**

My good Benefactors,

I feel that the end of my life nears, and that the day on which I will have to pay the usual tribute to death to descend into the tomb is close.

Before leaving you forever from this earth, I have to pay a debt that I owe you and thus satisfy a great need of my heart.

The debt that I must pay is that of gratitude for all you have done to help me evangelize and put on the path of virtue and work so many poor boys so that they might be a consolation to their family, useful to society, and, above all, so that they might save their very souls and in this way might be eternally happy.

Without your charity, I could have done little or nothing. Instead, with your charity we cooperated with the grace of God in order to dry many tears and save many souls. With your charity we founded numerous High Schools and Hospices where there were and are maintained thousands of orphans taken out of abandonment, pulled from the danger of irreligion and immorality, and by means of a good education, with study and with the acquisition of a trade, made good Christians and wise citizens.

With your charity we have established Missions in Patagonia, in Tierra del Fuego, and have sent hundreds of Gospel workers to spread and cultivate the vineyard of the Lord to the ends of the earth.

With your charity we have established printing houses in various cities and countries, have published for the people some millions of copies of books and pamphlets in defense of the Truth, as an encouragement to piety, and as a support for good manners.

With your charity we have raised up many chapels and churches, in which, for ages unending - until the end of the world - they will sing every day the praises of the Lord and of the Blessed Virgin, and will save very many souls.

Convinced that, after God, all this and other great good was done through the efficacious help of your charity, I feel the need to let everyone know it; therefore, before closing my final days, I want you to know my most profound gratitude, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

But if you have helped me with such goodness and perseverance, now I beg you to continue to help my Successor after my death. The works that I began with your help no longer have need of me, but they continue to have need of you and of all those who, like you, love to promote the good on this earth. To all, therefore, I entrust and recommend them.

To your encouragement and comfort I tell my Successor that both in the private and common prayers that are being made and will be made in Salesian houses, our Benefactors must always be remembered. I have also told him to put the intention right now that God may grant you a hundredfold for your charity even in the present – with health and harmony in your family, with prosperity on the farms and in business, and with freedom and distance from every misfortune. To your encouragement and comfort, I also note once again that the most efficacious work to obtain the pardon of sins and to assure life eternal is charity done to little children: to the smallest one, to the little abandoned one, as Our Divine Master Jesus assures us. I also noted to you how in these times, when the dearth of material means to educate the young and to educate the poorest and most abandoned youth to the faith and to good manners was so keenly felt, that the Holy Virgin made herself their protector, and so obtained for their Benefactors many extraordinary spiritual and even temporal graces.

I and all my Salesians with me are witnesses that many of our Benefactors, who were previously not so well off, became rather well-to-do after they began to be magnanimous in charity to our orphans.

In view of this and taught by the experience of many of them, who in one way or another, told me many times over in these and other similar words: "I don't want you to thank me when I give charity to your poor boys; it is I who ought to thank you who have asked me. Since I began to come to the aid of your orphans, my means have tripled."

One such person, the Comm. Antonio Cotta, often came himself to bring the alms, saying: "The more money I give to your works, the more my business thrives. I have experienced that the Lord gives me even in this present life a hundred-fold for what I give out of love for Him." He was our noteworthy benefactor until the age of 86 when God called him to enjoy in eternal life the fruit of his beneficence.

Even if I am tired and at the end of my strength, I could not leave before speaking to you and recommending to you my children, whom I am about to abandon: nonetheless, I must conclude and put down my pen.

Adieu, my dear Benefactors, my Salesian Cooperators, adieu. Many of you I have not been able to know in person in this life, but this isn't important: in the next world we will all know each other, and in eternity we will rejoice together over the good which, by the grace of God, we did on this earth, especially to the advantage of poor youth.

If, after my death, by the Divine Mercy, through the merits of Jesus Christ, and by the protection of Mary Help of Christians, I will be found worthy to be received into Paradise, I will pray always for you. I will pray for your families and for all your dear ones so that one day they might all come to praise the Majesty of the Creator in eternity and drink deeply of His Divine delights, singing of His infinite mercies.

Amen.

Always your most obliged Servant...

John Bosco, Priest