

Strenna 2021 of the Rector Major Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime:

Moved by Hope

“See, I make all things new.” (Rev. 21:5)

Closed within their own bubble, suspicious and frightened, people no longer meet. They don't talk, they don't look at each other. They are blocked, paralyzed, like society.

We know very well that we can't travel, can't meet up with people...

we could say that the so-called

“global village”

has gone back to being, once more,

a collection of so many small individual “villages”...

where it is each to their own and they look at each other with suspicion.

That's true, but by protecting ourselves we end up being further and further away.

And the messages that come to us from the media are all about ourselves: we are strong, everything will be fine, we must have faith in us... as if the solution to this situation was all in our hands. But do we really think so?

We, Don Bosco's Salesian Family, we Christians... we men and women have been willed by God to be a mirror of his goodness, a ray of hope, which brings us back to the great hope that is God. So let us try to reflect God's love... let us reflect that light that makes all things new. We must be the hand that helps to change values and visions.

Let us transform individualism into fellowship, solidarity

Volunteer1: A woman in Brazil

I have no idea how many houses I went to and how many things I brought.

What I do know is that such a thing had never happened to me before.

Usually I give food to the homeless, but this time I was bringing things that I too use at home,

Because the difficulty did not lie in the economic factor, but in restrictions to freedom.

That person could not go for a walk, could not leave the house; she had to deal with everything alone.

For those two minutes she was less alone. Just for a moment, but less alone.

Volunteer2: A boy in India

It is strange to be near someone, to be present, but without being able to be together.

I could not enter, all I could do was hand things over.

Once I asked for a name, on another occasion if everything was ok...

Not even I had seen days like this, it was a completely new routine.

Wherever you see a problem you have to go there, but if you've never seen such a problem before, how do you deal with it?

Volunteer3: A Sister from the Salesian Family in Europe

On TV they call them "the new poor" and maybe it is true because the poor are not all the same. Everyone is hungry, however, but even hunger is different; it can be hunger for bread or culture. Or hunger for autonomy, dignity, integration.

Everyone needs space and friendly people.

There are those who were born poor and those who have become accustomed to being poor.

There are those who have become poor overnight, and those who have become poor over time, as they are perpetually robbed.

There are those who are poor but do not accept it. It's not always easy to approach them; everyone is different.

They have found a family with us. We have tried to welcome them, to accompany them and promote them, having them become our teachers.

A family that doesn't sleep at night, thinking about how to get by, what to do to survive, to feed them tomorrow too the bread they need.

Let us transform isolation into an opportunity to seek our own authenticity and true and sincere encounter.

Volunteer4: South America –

Even though I know we use social networks to communicate with young people, I never thought that keeping in touch with them would be very difficult.

Volunteer5-Animator: S.America

A selfie or a post is not difficult. At times it happens that I should be in touch with them, but I say I will do it afterwards, I will do it later.

Volunteer1- Animator: S.America

But really it should not be like this, because I should do it.

Volunteer2 - Animator: S.America

Because I know that being close at this time, can only be expressed this way.

Psychologist: Spain –

As soon as the isolation began I started calling the people I was already providing a therapeutic process for so we could continue sessions by video.

But how does someone with no access do this, or who does not know how to do it?

And on the other hand, how you do it with people who don't even think they need to talk.

We will all come out of this, we cannot be alone, but we have to meet each other, have to understand, imagine, accompany, prevent.

Teacher: Italy –

They asked us to play an active part in stopping the virus: we are trying. I've never made a video call before, now I teach that way. But Giuseppe doesn't connect because he doesn't have a PC,

Chiara loses the connection continuously because she has to stay in her parents' butcher's shop, with all the distractions around, Luca doesn't have ADSL at home and Maria... there are 5 of them in 60 sqm. It's not the teaching that is missing, I don't care if they don't know their tables but that Joseph, Chiara, Luca and Maria all feel alone. And in fact by now I do nothing but send text messages.

Let us shift from division to unity, from arguing, lack of respect and division to joining forces and to harmony.

Let us shift from discouragement and pessimism to having confidence and hope.

Let us shift from being closed, from looking at the other as a risk and an adversary, to opening our doors and hearts in acceptance...

from emptiness to the horizon of transcendence.

We believe in a sun that shines forever. But are we able to see this sun?

And above all, are we able to show it to the world, to show its fruits?

The sun makes everything sprout, fills everything with flowers and God's sun gives us a new spring.

Yes, a new springtime...

and we are spring or autumn people?

God speaks to us through many springtime people who do know and have known how to live with hope. Let us think of our Father Don Bosco who lived his whole life moved by this virtue, facing up to many situations, tragedies and much pain.

He taught us that the path of faith and hope gives us the strength to act, to help and change things... or at least to contain them. Don Bosco looked beyond the problems and this strength to look ahead gave him faith and hope.

Let us think, for example, of the cholera situation: there were people who only cared about themselves and their needs, while Don Bosco and his boys, like many others, worked hard to help everyone to overcome the tragedy.

Because nobody saves themselves. If you have someone who loves you, you are saved. And we all have God who loves us. A world without God is a world without hope! That is why we must propose a path of genuine faith so that we can train ourselves in hope.

Let us train ourselves in hope, then, because we know and feel that God is with us.

Let us discover hope in prayer where we find our encounter with Jesus. This prayer which is listening and encounter with God; this prayer which has the power to transform us, to open our minds and hearts and which makes us feel that we are never alone.

Let us look for hope in activity, in fatigue, in daily life, because these are the places where we learn to have hope.

After all, when human beings launch into action in the effort to transform a situation, what they are doing is not just hoping, but looking with confidence and hope, dreaming of seeing the fruits of their own efforts.

Let us discern it in suffering and pain: these are realities that often allow us to open up to hope, instead of discouraging us.

I am confident it will end sooner or later.

Shariz Ibrahimi – Afghanistan

It is difficult it will go as God wills.

Nik Mohammad Jafari – Afghanistan

We cannot continue to stand against each other, we must support each other.

Camilo Gonzàlez - Colombia

We need to think of those who are worse off than us

Viktorija – Croatia

Let's put ourselves in other people's shoes and help each other... I have nothing!

Costanza - Sicily

All is on edge. It's all precarious!

Saylu Barry – Sierra Leone

Let us trust in Mary, She knows what to do

Mattia - Italy

No one is saved alone. We are all important.

Francesca - Italy