THE MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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DREAMS

THAT KEEP COMING TRUE!

When reflecting on all this, I feel I have a little authority to say: “Dear Don Bosco, your Dream is still VERY ALIVE.”

Dear readers of the *Salesian Bulletin*,

I am sending you my personal greeting, as I do every month. These come from my heart and my reflections are motivated by what I am experiencing at the moment because I believe that sharing what is good as life happens does us good.

I'm writing to you now from Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. Prior to this stop, I made a beautiful and very significant visit to Juazeiro do Norte (in the Brazilian northeast of Recife). These last few days have been “Dominican.” In just a few hours I will continue the journey - to Vietnam. In the midst of all this 'hustle and bustle' - that can nonetheless be lived with much peace - I have been nourishing my Salesian heart with beautiful experiences.

I'm going to tell you about them because they speak about the Salesian mission, but permit me to begin with an anecdote that a Salesian told me yesterday and that made me laugh, moved me, and spoke to me about “the Salesian heart.”

**A little “stone-thrower”**

A confrere told me that, on one occasion, while traveling along one of the roads in the interior of this country, he passed by a place where some children had become accustomed to throwing stones at cars to cause some small incident - such as breaking glass - and in the confusion steal from the traveler.

Well, that's what happened to him. He was passing through a certain village and a boy threw a stone to break the glass. He succeeded. The confrere got out of the car, restrained the boy, and made him take him to his parents. The scenario in that family was such that there was no father around - because he had abandoned them - and only a long-suffering mother who had been left with this son and a little daughter. When the Salesian told the mother that her son had broken the glass (which the boy admitted), that it cost a lot of money, and that the boy had to pay for it, the mother apologized, begging for forgiveness, and made our confrere understand that she had no way tp pay him for she was poor. But she would reprimand her son, etc. etc... This is how the dialogue went when the little girl, the little sister of 'this little Magone of Don Bosco', who had her hand closed, opened it and gave him her only coin, almost worthless. It was her whole treasure. Then she said, "Take it, sir, to help pay for the glass." This Salesian confrere of mine told me that he was so moved that he could not speak anymore and ended up giving some money to the lady to help her family.

I didn't know how to interpret this story but it has so much of life, pain, need, and humanity in it that I promised myself I would share it with you. A few hours later, very close to the Salesian House where I was staying, they showed me another small Salesian house where we welcome and take in street children, most of whom are Haitian, and who have no one. We are well aware of the tragedy that is taking place in Haiti, where there is no order, government, or law., and only the gangs control everything. To know that these boys, minors, who arrived here – how, we don’t know – and with nowhere to go – are welcomed into our house makes my heart overflow. There are a total of 20 living there at the moment. Once they have stabilized, they will then move on to other homes with other educational objectives. We have several such houses where there are always Salesians and lay educators, and another 90 minors right now. My heart swelled as I thought that Valdocco in Turin was born like this, with Don Bosco, and that this is how we Salesians were born - from a small group of those boys from Valdocco, together with Don Bosco, who gave rise *de facto* to the Salesian Congregation on that December 18th in 1859.

How can we not see “the Hand of God” in all this? How can we fail to perceive that all this work responds to much more than some human strategem? How can we not perceive that here and in thousands of other Salesian places in the world good continues to be done (always with the help of so many generous people and many others who share a passion for education)?

This year, in Madrid, Spain, and in other places (including America Latina), the magnificent [short film](https://youtu.be/4vOREhVKjSc?si=i__MZALZCIpYcnC2) entitled [*Canillitas*](https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2023-09/canillitas-salesian-documentary-giving-voice-to-expolited-youth.html) was shown. It captures the lives of so many of these boys. I was happy to touch this reality up close with my own eyes and hands. And it is very true, my friends, that Don Bosco's dream is still coming true today, 200 years later.

As though something was still lacking, yesterday I spent the whole day with young people from the Salesian world who call themselves and know themselves to be leaders throughout Salesian Latin America. They are part of a movement that tries to get at least the Salesian educational world to take the care of creation, and ecology itself, very seriously, with the sensitivity that the Holy Father Pope Francis displayed in 'Laudato Si'. Young people from their “Sustainable Latin America” movement were present (in person or online) from twelve Latin American nations. I thought it was beautiful for young people to dream and commit to something good for them, for the world, and for all of us.

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Keep well and be happy.

Don Angel