THE MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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THE BEATITUDES OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY

In January we celebrated the Salesian Family Spirituality Days with people from 28 nations. These are formation days for the entire Family that have been held for the last 37 years; they become more significant each time. Just as was the case last year, the Days took place in Valdocco, in Turin, i.e., in our Salesian holy places.

These are sites filled with the Holy Spirit, where everything speaks to us and reminds us of Don Bosco and the charism which he received from that same Spirit in behalf of the boys and girls, teenagers, and young adults of our world.

The topic covered is in full keeping with the call that Pope Francis launched to the entire Church in his apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*: the call to sanctity, a simple sanctity, a sanctity of daily life. This is the sanctity that so many millions and millions of people live in an anonymous way – people who will never be raised to the heights of the altar (canonized) but will, nonetheless, still live beautiful Christian lives. Who knows whether you are one of these saints of daily life, dear reader?

The fruits of the reflections shared during these days produced these “Beatitudes of the Salesian Family.” I wish to make them known to you, dear readers, because, in my opinion, they are not just sentences plucked from some book. No, they are a summary of that Salesian life to which we are all called, whether as consecrated Salesian religious, Salesian laity, or the young in our worldwide Family.

Here are the seven Beatitudes.

**1. Blessed is the Salesian Family that finds joy in poverty; imbued with God’s grace, it will work among the poorest and most marginalized youth – this is holiness!**

I can assure you, as regards all that I have experienced and have seen around the Salesian world during these five years as Rector Major – 85 nations to date – that each day God continues to make true “life miracles” for so very many boys, girls, and adolescents, especially for the poorest and those most marginalized.

These are miracles which have nothing to do with economics, but which have to do completely with how we treat the young: person-to-person, with authenticity, affection, welcoming, and listening to each young person and his or her situation – situations which very often encase truly dramatic realities.

**2. Blessed is the Salesian Family that embodies the docility and love of the Good Shepherd. It thus welcomes and accompanies youths with loving kindness, educating them in dialogue and in welcoming diversity – this is holiness!**

How important it seems to me to educate the young in dialogue and in welcoming those who are different. On one of my most recent visits in Europe, a teenager prayed aloud that we might be capable of “losing fear of foreigners.” I asked myself, “What seeds are we sowing – we adults, or at least some of the civil authorities of our societies today – if a 15-year-old girl manages to be afraid of someone simply because he or she is different?”

**3. Blessed is the Salesian Family that accompanies others, heals the wounds of those who suffer, and gives hope to those who feel hopeless, thus bringing the joy of the Risen Christ – this is holiness!**

Hope, one of the Christian virtues and a “magic” word, is very much missing today. At times, we cannot resolve others’ problems, but we can stand by their side, showing welcome and respect. We can help cure their wounds, for who is there who does not carry some wound or hurt in his or her soul and heart? Who is there who is not grateful for even a small gesture that helps alleviate the pain of life’s wounds?

**4. Blessed is the Salesian Family that hungers and thirsts for justice and accompanies youths on their mission to actualize their life plan within their families, in the workplace, and within political and social commitment – this is holiness!**

Everywhere in the world where I have been, I have asked the young whom I encountered whether they had dreams, ideals, and plans for their life – for someone who does not have these runs the risk of settling for “just surviving” and not living life to the full. For this reason, one of the most beautiful things that the Salesian mission does is to accompany the young, every young person, no matter his or her situation, to take up the journey, whether it be a life plan that is small or great, simple or hefty. To accompany them is to help them anchor their lives to the pillars that aid them in standing strong against the powerful winds and the agitated seas.

**5. Blessed is the Salesian Family that has a living experience of mercy, opening its eyes and heart to active listening and forgiving. It thus becomes a home that welcomes others – this is holiness!**

If there is one word that is not in common use in our society today, it is mercy. This is why when Pope Francis speaks so much of mercy, the prophets of doom hasten to say that his words are stupid and signs of weakness. Because of this, they do not make any great or real progress in Christian life. That is not so with us, my friends. Our way of understanding life and education happens principally and primarily through an understanding, compassionate, and merciful gaze that exudes welcome and grounds itself in profound listening. We need this so much in our lives, don’t we?

**6. Blessed is the Salesian Family that seeks to be authentic, whole, and transparent while cultivating a loving gaze that goes beyond appearances and recognizes the grace of God within each person – this is holiness!**

This beatitude of ours is almost diametrically opposed to what society tries to “sell” us. It is much easier to “sell” belief in easy success, using tricks and lies, and the “black market” rather than to believe in and stand for what produces true good. It is much easier put on airs and to stand with someone who has “strength” or power or success than it is to stand by the truth and what is just. For this reason, *we* unite ourselves to people who do what is good and right – for they exist too – and who believe in authenticity, transparency, and honesty. We cannot have it both ways. We must choose: it is either one way or the other for the two cannot exist simultaneously. Furthermore, we seek to offer the young what gives them the greatest dignity, even if it is not always the easiest thing to do.

**7. Blessed is the Salesian Family that draws from the truth of the Gospel and remains faithful to the charism of Don Bosco. It thus becomes yeast for a new humanity and joyfully embraces the joy of the Cross for the Kingdom of God – this is holiness!**

We continue to believe that Don Bosco’s charism, this gift from God for the Church and the world, is pertinent today and as necessary as ever. We believe, with all humility, that today’s world would miss something great and necessary if the Salesian charism did not exist in the thousands of presences spread across the entire world in 134 countries and among millions of young people and their families.

And we continue to believe that – even if we know for certain that a tree that falls makes more noise than the forest that grows silently. We want to be that forest (bosco) that grows silently but gives a home to so many, sheltering them in its shade.

Let us, then, be happy – let us be blessed.

Affectionately,

Don Angel