THE MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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THE POWER OF LOVE

How indescribable and unique is God’s Love. It creates peace and tranquility. If our little human experiences of love have enough strength to change people’s lives – then how immense His Love must be!

We are approaching the time of Lent which will prepare us for the Passover of the Lord. At this Season, the Church proposes to us prayer, fasting, and charity help us along our path to Easter.

With this my greeting I am proposing to you a reflection that has a great deal to do with an excellent way to prepare for Easter: The way to live more and better at all times by LOVING – but truly loving, as they say colloquially, “until it hurts.”

*This reflection is attributed to Mother Teresa of Calcutta:*

*Wherever you go, spread love: first of all in your own home. Shower love on your sons and daughters, your wife or your husband, your next-door neighbor. Do not let anyone ever come to you without leaving feeling better and happier. Be the living expression of God's goodness – goodness in your face, goodness in your eyes, goodness in your smile, goodness in your warm greeting.*

There is no doubt that this is a simple and yet very specific program. Pope Benedict XVI offered it to us at the time as his first Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (*God Is Love*). It is a love that we have received and have met in our personal encounter with Christ. Pope Benedict tells us in his encyclical that it is: a love “that gives a horizon to life (…). The passion of God for each one of us is made concrete in a personal Love – a Love that is predilection and that gives meaning to our existence. God loves Man and every human being, and His love becomes visible on the faces of those with whom we live.”

During a reflective moment I thought about how indescribable and unique God’s Love is. It creates peace and tranquility. If our little human experiences of love have enough strength to change people's lives – a change that when it is a product of love always lifts up, always helps one get up, always “elevates’ – and always launches forward to help one “get out of the ditch” – then how immense His Love must be!

A beautiful fact of life that confirms what I have been saying follows here:

A university professor wanted the students of his Sociology class to go to the fringes of the big city where they lived to record the life stories of 200 young people. Students were asked to offer an assessment of the future of each respondent. In all cases, students gave the following diagnosis: "*without the least probability of success*."

Twenty-five years later, another professor of Sociology by chance found that previous study and commissioned his students to follow up on the project begun many years before to see what had happened in the lives of those boys and girls, if they could be found.

With the exception of 20 who had moved to another place to live or who had died, the students discovered that 176 of the remaining 180 had achieved success in life; i.e., they had managed to have orderly, stable, and reasonably happy lives.

*The professor was stunned and decided to continue the investigation. Fortunately, many of those people lived relatively close by and it was possible to ask each one how they interpreted the path their lives had taken, knowing that the family and neighborhood context presaged the worst ... Well, in every case the answer, overflowing with a great feeling of gratitude, was, "I had this teacher."*

That teacher was still alive and the professor looked for this still “alert and agile-minded old woman” to ask what magic formula she had used to “save” those boys and girls from the toughness of the ghetto and to guide them along the path of an honest, neat, and stable life.

**→** It is really very simple, the teacher replied. **"I simply LOVED THEM."**

We can tell many, many stories like this one from our own Salesian educational history from all over the world. We are speaking precisely of that great truth: Love has a power that transforms everything. Love nurtures and heals. Love gives confidence in oneself; it strengthens and empowers. Love moves hearts and life and has the strength to move the world and our lives within it.

It is too bad that we often act otherwise!

Why do we so often struggle because we hold onto grudges, and foment rivalries and confrontations, rather than create spaces of understanding and peace?

Did our God make us so imperfect that even while knowing that Love can do everything, it is very difficult for us to live on Love every minute, every hour, every day – or did He simply make us for Love and we confuse and block ourselves with many other things?

I wish you all the best, my friends of the *Salesian Bulletin* [and *Snippets* and other Salesian newsletters]and I encourage you to join together to be part of this great group of millions of people who believe **in the power of Love** because "**GOD IS LOVE.**" (I Jn. 4:8)