THE MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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EDUCATION’S

HEART OF GOLD

**Why devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus**

**is in the DNA of the Salesian Congregation**

This June I wish to present to you the reality of the meaning of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Rome (*Sacro Cuore*). It is a church with a very great history – one that has its roots in Don Bosco himself – for at the Pope’s request he spent the last years of his life, as well as his last energies and strength, on the construction of this beloved church.

The Sacred Heart, and every church and devotion in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, speaks of the Love of that Divine Heart, the Heart of the Son of God, for each one of His sons and daughters in the entire human race. It also speaks of suffering and of the Love we receive from God, which is not always reciprocated.

Today I wish to add one more aspect: I think it also speaks of the pain that Jesus our Lord feels in the face of the suffering of many people: rejection, immigration without a place to go, loneliness, and the violence done to many. I think it can be said that He speaks of all this, too, and without a doubt at the same time blesses everything that is done on behalf of those less fortunate, just as Jesus Himself did when traveling the roads of Judea and Galilee.

**Very many silver hearts**

One joyful reality that undoubtedly makes the very Heart of God rejoice is what I myself saw being carried out in the Don Bosco Salesian Foundation on the islands of Tenerife and Grand Canary. I was there in these past weeks. Among the many things experienced, I was able to witness the work of 140 educators who carry forward the various projects of the Foundation, including the reception of those in need and their housing, work training, and subsequent placement in the working world.

I also had an encounter with another group of a hundred adolescents and young adults who have been blessed to have received this service that Don Bosco gives to the least. At the end of our precious meeting, they gave me a gift. In a small, heart-shaped cardboard box, they had placed more than a hundred hearts, bearing the names of Nain, Rocío, Armiche, Mustapha, Xousef, Ainoha, Desirée, Abdjalil, Beatriz and Ibrahim, Yone, and Mohamed, and a hundred others, each with a message written on it. These messages expressed something simple, and in a simple way, but still something which sprang from the heart. These are some examples of the precious statements:

* Thank you for making all this possible
* Thank you for the second chance you have given me in my life
* I’m still fighting. It’s easier to do so with your help
* Thank you because you have restored my joy
* Thank you for helping me believe that I can do everything I set out to do
* Thank you for the food and a home
* Thank you from the bottom of my heart
* Thank you for having helped me
* Thank you for this opportunity to grow
* Thank you for believing in us young people despite the situation in which we live

There were a hundred others, just like these, addressed to Don Bosco and to the educators who are at their side every day in Don Bosco’s name.

I listened to all they shared with me. I heard some of their stories – many of them filled with pain; I saw the look in their eyes and their smiles. I was very proud to be a Salesian and to belong to a family of such splendid brothers, educators, and young people.

I thought, yet again, that Don Bosco is as timely as ever – and more necessary than ever. I also thought how great is the educational delicacy with which we accompany these young people along their path, taking each one where he or she is and not where we would like them to be.

Together we said a prayer addressed to the God who loves us all, to the God who blesses His sons and daughters, using words that made Christians, Muslims, and Hindus feel comfortable. No doubt, the Spirit of God assisted us all.

I was happy because just as Don Bosco himself welcomed his first boys to Valdocco, the same thing is experienced today in so many “Valdoccos” around the world.

I have no doubt that the Sacred Heart of Jesus is full of the Love that manifests itself in the many wounds healed in each one of these boys and girls because, we well know, Love heals and cures.

Blessed Solemnity of the Sacred Heart,

Don Angel