**THE MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR**

Don Ángel Fernández Artime

FEARLESS

YOUNG PROPHETS

We are united by one mission: *the salvation of many souls, beginning with our own*, as our beloved father Don Bosco used to say.

I greet you very cordially, dear friends and readers of the *Salesian Bulletin*, the publication so dear to Don Bosco’s heart.

I want to share with you today a sample of the wonderful witness young people are giving, through the words of a young Venezuelan woman.

On February 9th of this year I visited Venezuela again and there I participated in a beautiful National Encoutner with their young people. For that occasion, this young lady, Eusibeth, had written a message in her own hand and with her own words to express something that was very dear to her heart. In a public address at that Encounter, she delivered her message, speaking also in the name of the generous, hopeful, and suffering young people of that beautiful land.

This is what she shared:

“Dear Don Ángel,

From the depths of our hearts we thank the Lord for your visit to our country and for taking time to meet with us, your young people, whom we know are very much beloved to you.

With these words, I wish to express the feelings of each one of us, as we try to travel the path to sanctity. We all have a Salesian heart - from the indigenous who run through the Amazon jungle, to our Andean brothers and sisters who are filled with closeness and kindness, to the youth of the central region who joyfully build the civilization of love - the *Guaros*, *Orientals*, *Corianos*, and *Zulianos* - all of us who have the right to be called Venezuelans.

Also united with us now is every young person who has had to leave our land and turn foreign soil into a home, school, parish, and playground.

If there is anything that characterizes us as young people, in addition to our unique personalities and different ways of thinking, it is that we are united by one mission: *the salvation of many souls, beginning with our own,* as our beloved father Don Bosco used to say.

It is no secret to anyone what we have to live through each day: a reality where we are inundated with currents from the world that want to sweep us away and prevent us from dreaming infinite dreams and resting our hopes on great ideals. Salesian youth spirituality has allowed us to go forward with hope and to renew our faith, even when everything seems uncertain and impossible at times.

Without a doubt, we young Venezuelans are brave prophets who, despite the fear of being judged or attacked, do not allow anything to silence us. We are young people who get up every morning, skipping breakfast so we can go to school or university. We are young people who go forward tenaciously, putting in all the miles and the effort we must to complete a comprehensive formation, committed to education - everyone’s best tool.

We are young people who, despite being forced to find a job out of necessity and leaving aside what we really love and that of which we dream, dare to be light at this time in history in the midst of a people who have been greatly wounded and who thirst for Jesus. Despite the fact that we sometimes think of “throwing in the towel” due to our fragility when faced with a world that is in some way falling apart, still, we persevere because God’s loving gaze and the maternal protection of Mary invite us to continue to place our lives at the service of others, especially the poorest and most at-risk boys and girls.

Being young Salesians helps us respond as faithful disciples to everything we are experiencing. We are ‘chamos’ (“kids”) who are real, authentic, bold and daring 'saints' of today: in jeans, sneakers, and T-shirts, as Pope Francis says.

Don Ángel and all the members of our Salesian Family: your presence encourages us to make a difference, to continue fighting for a just and holy Venezuela, betting everything we have for the good of the young. ***Never stop accompanying or believing in us.***

Thank you so much for everything!"

There ends the witness of this young woman.

Listening to Eusibeth before 800 young people on a warm afternoon in Caracas made me think about how and how much Don Bosco believed in his boys, in their capabilities, in their potential, in the goodness that is in each young person's heart.

What Don Bosco knew and believed 160 years ago continues today in all parts of the world. It is not true that today's youth do not have a beautiful heart. Certainly, there are young people who travel a path of confusion, slavery, and death while still alive *... Young people who really need to be saved.*

But there are many others, millions and millions - the young people whom I met together with Eusibeth are proof of this - who believe in life, in the beauty of Love, in the beauty of sharing, and in the fullness of meaning which God gives them.

Is it still possible for us to say such things today, in these times? I say an adamant “yes”.

Keep well and may the good Lord fill you with His peace, dear friends.

Don Angel