THE MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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FROM VALDOCCO TO THE WHOLE WORLD

Today the invitation is made to everyone: Come! Get to know Valdocco. Browse around. Experience this place. Be still and listen to what the “walls are saying” because “at Valdocco, everything speaks”... What has taken place in transforming this space is much more than the mere remodeling of walls and rooms. A dream has come to life.

It all began more than 160 years ago when a small band of young men and boys who loved their educator, Don Bosco, made the commitment to give life to a 'Society' - the “Pious Society of Saint Francis de Sales”. Out of this first small group grew a new Religious Order, today called the “Salesians of Don Bosco”.

Prior to the gathering of that small band, Don Bosco had arrived at the "Pinardi" property and shed. He rented its two pieces of land to begin the first permanent Salesian Oratory. It was here, in this humble and simple place, that his precious work began. In this, he followed the example of Our Lord who was born in a stable, in the greatest poverty, and with the sole protection of the loving arms of his Mother, Mary of Nazareth, and of her humble spouse, St. Joseph.

**Today as Yesterday**

In just a few days, October 2-4, 2020, we will celebrate with the public the realization of a “dream”, a beautiful dream, of making the Pinardi property a place that “speaks”. What has taken place in transforming this space is much more than the mere remodeling of walls and rooms. A dream has come to life: The dream of turning the site of the first Salesian Oratory, Valdocco, into a space, a place, and a playground that speak of the Salesian charism. Here is the place – the Pinardi House - where those first orphans who knocked on the door of Mamma Margaret's kitchen were welcomed and where the Salesian Congregation was born. It is a place rich in our charism and brimming with life.

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Come to this house where hundreds of young men and boys and dozens of Salesians lived alongside Don Bosco and became a true family in a home that was a “school of sanctity”.

Get to know this place that has continued welcoming hundreds and hundreds of young people, changing their lives by the life experienced here, helping them become "good Christians and upright citizens."

Browse around this space that saw, just like the little seed that is spoken of in the Gospel, the first sprout of what would become a lush, green, and healthy tree that today spreads its branches over the entire world: Don Bosco’s Salesian Family.

Experience this home which witnessed how a young priest full of evangelizing and educational passion inspired that band of his own boys with enthusiasm and zeal to continue his dream: the first Salesians. It is they who gave continuity to the Congregation, they who succeeded Don Bosco, and they who made his missionary dream come true, first in Patagonia, then in much of the Americas, and today in 134 nations.

Be still and listen in this house and this courtyard (once Mamma Margarita's garden). Here there was life and joy, mingled with difficulties and hunger, where everyone desired to become a saint. From these few square yards of land, there have come 13 who have been declared Venerable, Blessed or Saint. They grew up here, allowing the Spirit to sow in them the seed of 'sanctity lived in Valdocco'. Our Beloved Don Bosco was a master in the art of proposing lofty and beautiful ideals to his boys.

Here - on this Pinardi property - Don Bosco, Mamma Margaret, Dominic Savio, Michael Rua, Philip Rinaldi, Luigi Variara, and Leonard Murialdo lived, walked, worked, prayed, and played, to name but a mere few. Numerous others walked these grounds – so numerous that this house and courtyard had to be expanded. Larger churches were necessary because the boys soon numbered 500. They quickly outgrew the smaller churches: the tiny Pinardi Shed Chapel and the Church of Saint Francis de Sales. On this land they walked a path of sanctity. At the end of this path we stand in the shadow of the beautiful Basilica of Mary Help of Christians under the protection of Our Heavenly Mother who covers all of Valdocco with her mantle.

This house that we present to everyone today to be visited and known is and will be a very meaningful experience for everyone:

* from tourists who do not know anything about the Salesian world. These will realize that something great arose from nothing in this place, even if they should gain but a superficial understanding,
* to those who know, love, live, and have our charism in their hearts. These will touch with their hands, see with their eyes, and know in their hearts how God brought forth from within these walls something very beautiful for the young people of the world.

Today, these walls wherein the Salesian charism was born and matured, and from which it spread into the whole world, have been cared for and preserved so as to remain a place of universal heritage throughout time.

From this house, these churches, and this playground Don Bosco will continue to reach the whole world. From all over the world people will come to Valdocco to meet the Lord who has done great things, together with Our Mother, Mary Help of Christians, because “it is She who has done everything” and who continues “to do everything” - in union with Don Bosco, Mamma Margherita, and so many others. The spirit of Valdocco is still very much alive!

We offer you far more than just beautiful walls.

We offer you far more than just a museum.

We offer you far more than just works of art.

We offer you far more than just historical memories.

We intend to offer you pleasant friendship, encounters, and visits that will touch your heart and your life as you gaze upon these places sanctified by those who walked them.

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