## “Don Bosco storyteller: Why he used narratives to educate the young”

Fr Gildasio Mendez dos Santos

Saint John Bosco was a great storyteller!

Whether describing about his childhood, or speaking about his dreams or writing the biography of some of his boys, he knew how to tell stories to touch people hearts and minds.

In the virtual and digital word narratives play a very important role. We could say that social media is about narratives. People love to write and tell their daily stories and publish them in format of short narratives.

In the world of digital and virtual communication, journalism and television is very much about narratives. Talking and reality shows are designed based on stories. Movies and many music lyrics are written in form of narratives.

Why do we like to narrate our stories?

From the perspective of art to tell a story in a narrative manner is a very efficient and powerful way of communication. It has the magic of capturing attention and get people involved in the plot of the story we have to say. Narrative has to do with immersing ourselves into the story.

But, what is a narrative?

Etymologically, it has its root from the Latin language: narratives, that is, suited to narration; narrat\narrare: to tell, to relate, to explain, to recount.

Narrative is a way of communicating characterised by talking about things and experiences through letters, stories, literature, tales, using images, metaphors, mythical, religious and cultural elements to communicate a message.

Storytelling prefers simple, human language, visual imagines that touch the imaginative, cognitive and emotional aspects of the readers or listeners to get them involved in the plot and the story being told. It has the power to transport us mentally and emotionally to different places and times.

It’s true that narratives touch people hearts and imagination. It has the magic of getting us vividly involved in the plot with beginning, middle and end of the story! It touches imagination and makes us active in the process of communicating.

But what really makes it attractable and convincible?

Narratives do need truth! In narratives and stories of people, one of the fundamental aspects for those who write or speak is the true consistency of the narratives.

A good narrative requires from the narrator a coherence between what he speaks, believes and feels in such a way that he becomes whole in communicating. All these aspects have to be synchronized with the words, the facial expressions and emotions of the narrator.

Therefore, narrative is not only about style! It’s above all about the truth, it has to do with ourselves and the coherence between what we say and what we do and what we mean.

When we narrate one experience we live, we are verbalizing our feelings, expressing our inner motives, becoming who we are through telling stories about what we feel, what we believe and what we experience. Narratives are open doors through which we express ourselves.

One the most important thing in narrative is believing in our own stories, in what we say, when we are consistent with the narrative of our stories.

But, what kind of stories?

When our stories are truly coherent with our deep self and give the best of ourselves.

For instance, when we face difficult situations of life that deeply challenge us like an illness, a loss of a loved one, the loss of a job, a great existential crisis, it is our deep self, the instinct to survive, our inner strength that comes to defend us from threats. By facing these challenges with faith, love and perseverance we build our true message. By facing real experiences in life, we express our deepest values and the best part of who we are.

Narrative is about real life and meaningful experiences!

From this perspective, when we look the losses that Don Bosco experienced in childhood and adolescence we see that they had a pro-found influence in developing an attitude in him of deep faith and authenticity regarding his feelings, and the courage to face adversity and interpret the presence of God present in his life.

Throughout his entire life, Don Bosco lived his joys and sorrows in an authentic and true way! Because he was authentic and true with his life, he knew how to be a human spiritual reference point for many people.

Don Bosco was very confident of sharing his stories and dreams with his Salesians and boys. But there is something else very important about how Don Bosco shaped his narratives: through faith!! His stories, his dreams, his writings were interpreted through his deep faith in God and in the Mother of Jesus.

Narratives also have to do with the testimony of love and caring for others. Don Bosco narrates stories characterized by his strong and faithful love for the youth: being among them, captivating them, loving them, demanding the best of them, creating affective bonds, placing challenges before them, working together, getting involved in reli-gious, educative and artistic activities.

Don Bosco learned how to narrate experiences of himself and realized the importance of narrating the lives of others.

Don Bosco wrote historical narratives of the three biographies and stories of Comollo (1844); Magone (1861); Besucco (1864). In these writings he used stories of his young people in an intelligent and creative way.

Narratives of lives! Narrative of testimonies! Biography as story tell-ing!

Digital technology and virtual communication have definitely changed the way we relate to each other through the social media, the internet and the artificial intelligence.

Human beings continue to creating contents, producing information, sending out news and building up a incredible global human network-ing.