

What a gift, time!

The start of a new year in our liturgy, is enlightened by the ancient blessing with which the Israelite priests used to bless the people: "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord let his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord look upon you with kindness and give you peace."

Dear friends and readers of the Salesian Bulletin, we are at the beginning of a new year. Let us express our best wishes to each other for this new year and for all the time that lies ahead. Let our greetings be a gift that contains all other gifts for a truly fulfilling life.

Let this wish be really enlightening. Let us let Don Bosco who, when he arrived at the seminary in Chieri stopped in front of the sundial that still exists today in the courtyard, and reflected: "Looking up at a sundial, I read this verse: *"Afflictis lentae, celeres gaudentibus horae."* Here, I said to my friend, is our program of life: let us always be cheerful and time will pass quickly (Biographical Memoirs I, 374).

Our first wish to all of you is to live what Don Bosco reminds us: live well, live serenely, and bring serenity to all those around you and time will acquire a different value! Every moment in time is a treasure; but it is a treasure that passes quickly. Don Bosco always loved to comment: "The three enemies of man are: death (which surprises); time (which escapes him), the devil (who lays his snares to entice him)" (MB V, 926).

According to an old saying: "Remember that being happy is not having a sky without storms, a road without accidents, work without effort, and relationships without disappointments." "Being happy is not just celebrating successes, but learning lessons from failures. Being happy is recognizing that life is worth living, despite all the challenges, misunderstandings, and periods of crisis. It is thanking God every morning for the miracle of life."

A wise man kept a huge pendulum clock in his study that chimed every hour with solemn slowness, but also with a resounding echo.

"But doesn't it disturb you?" asked a student.

"No," replied the wise man. "Because at every hour I am forced to ask myself: what have I done with the hour that has just passed?"

Time is the only non-renewable resource. It consumes itself at an incredible speed. We know that we will not have another chance. Therefore, all the good we can do, all the love we can give, all the kindness and the gentleness we are capable of must be given now. Because we will not return to this earth again. With a perpetual veil of remorse within us, we feel that Someone will ask us: "What have you done with all that time I gave you?"

Our hope is called Jesus.

In this new year that we have just begun, the dates and numbers of a calendar are conventional signs; they are signs and numbers invented to measure time. In the transition from the old year to the new year, very little has changed. Yet the perception of a year that is ending forces us to always take stock. How much have we loved? How much have we lost? How much have we become better? How much have we become worse? Passing time never leaves us the same.

The liturgy, at the dawn of the new year, has its own way of making us take stock. It does so through the initial words of the Gospel of John – words that may seem to be difficult to grasp, but actually reflect the depth of life: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God: all things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." At the core of every life resounds a Word greater than us. It is the reason for our existence, for the existence of the world, for the existence of everything. This

Word is God Himself – the Son. This Word is Jesus. The name of the reason why we were made is called Jesus.

He is the true reason for which everything exists, and it is in him that we can understand what exists. Our life should not be judged by comparing it with history, with its events, and with its way of thinking. Our life cannot be judged by looking at ourselves and at our own experience alone. Our life is understandable only if it is approached from the perspective of Jesus. In him everything takes on a profound sense of meaning. Even the apparent contradictions and injustices are seen in a different light. It is by looking at Jesus that we come to get a deeper insight into ourselves. A psalm says it well: "In your light, we see light."

This is the way to see Time according to the Heart of God, and we hope to live this new time in this way.

The new year will bring to all of us, to the Salesian family, and to the Congregation in particular important events and novelties. All in the context of the gift of the Jubilee that we are living in the Church!

Within the spirit of the Jubilee, let us be carried away by the Hope that is the presence of God in our lives.

The first month of this new year, January, is dotted with Salesian feasts that lead us to the Solemnity of Don Bosco. Let us thank God for this delightful dish with which he allows us to begin this new year.

Let us therefore leave the last word to Don Bosco and let this maxim of his shape our 2025: "My children, preserve time and time will preserve you forever." (MB XVIII 482, 864).