THE MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

Don Angel Fernandez Artime

«HERE WITH YOU I FEEL AT HOME»

«Here with you I feel at home: to stay with you is my very life.» (BM IV, 455) This phrase that gushed from Don Bosco’s heart is still the secret of the Salesian Family.

Dear friends and readers of the *Salesian Bulletin*, the magazine so dear to Don Bosco’s heart, for he believed that this publication was the best means to make known all the good that was being done in Valdocco among his boys and in other places where they tried to replicate the life of the Oratory in its early years. Among these latter were the first steps that the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians took in the Missions of Patagonia.

Today I send you again, as I do every month, an affectionate and cordial greeting. At the same time, I share you that I have conflicting feelings as I write this message for November. This is because I would like to speak to you of the present state of this pandemic that is no longer the one of months ago. These days, the pandemic has immersed us in a strange and ugly feeling of distance, distrust, and fear of contagion (even if you are in the middle of the forest and no one is within 100s of feet of you).

Then, too, I would like to speak to you today of those elderly “who are so much a part of us and who are yet so alone” because they live right next to us, because their number increases more and more, and because this COVID pandemic has created the perfect context to cause them to be even more alone, for us to stay further away now, and to distance us from seeing that they are true bearers of life’s wisdom.

**Don Bosco City**

In the end, my heart was won over by another experience that refers to young people who were at first in difficult situations and then later living their true dignity.

I don't know why, but these memories cause me to breathe fresh, clean air deeply.

What I share with you now I experienced just a few days ago. While I was speaking personally here in Rome with the Provincial of our Salesian Province of Colombia-Medellín, my curiosity led me to pose a question: I wanted to know how their house, “Don Bosco City,” was doing now. I had visited that work, and there had met many young people of all kinds, including street kids rescued from that life. On that particular occasion, I was greatly impressed by my encounter with some adolescents, girls and boys who had been rescued from the guerrillas.

My heart was filled with joy to know that young ex-guerrillas are still present in two of our houses. Once they are rescued from where they were living (either by force or by their own will), these young people are sent, if they accept it, to a Salesian house to start a new life.

The Provincial told me that one young woman is just about to enter the University. She is full of joy and certainly a reason to feel the beautiful pride of a Salesian educator. What I did not expect to hear was the testimony of this young woman who, after a few years in that Salesian house and feeling really at home, gave this witness to a group of officials who were visiting our educational institution.

She told them: “Look, I had promised the guerrillas for years that I would give them my body, my heart, and my soul. And so I did. But then I came to know Don Bosco and all that he continues to do for us young people here in this house. And I invite other young people to take up this cause and commit ourselves to it with all our strength.”

I was speechless because I thought that I had understood very well how this young woman was committed at one time to a cause in which she found herself or in which she had chosen to be involved. But then she discovered that, in this Salesian house, that life could be different and she could “fight” another way—for just causes. I imagine that she dreams of becoming a great professional, a wife, and a mother.

So I share this with you as I say to myself, dear readers: these simple causes, these concrete and everyday 'utopias' that not only change a person's life but also change *their entire life universe inside of them* continue to be worthwhile.

**The drop in the ocean**

When I was in Calcutta visiting the sisters of the Congregation of Mother Teresa (Saint Teresa of Calcutta), and had the opportunity to pray in the same chapel where she had prayed, to celebrate the Eucharist next to her grave, and to see the poor who lived right outside the door waiting for those Sisters who went out very early to meet them, to care for them, and to save each one’s universe, one by one, I discovered the confirmation of my conviction about the value of the little things that you who read and that I who write can do.

A dish of rice saved a life in Calcutta. The Salesian house in Don Bosco City allowed a young woman to be who she was, with the dignity she has, and helped her develop her potential to the full. And so it is in millions and millions of cases in the world that are not well-known but that are like seeds that germinate and bear fruit each day.

I confess that bad news tires me because it seems that only bad things make the news. I propose that we join those people who want to make only good news into a TV news broadcast. Let us feed our spirit with what makes us breathe deeply of fresh, clean air as has happened to me with the story of this young woman who discovered that her life could be different.

Thank you for your attentive reading and, most certainly, thank you for sharing my love for things that are good.

Friends of Don Bosco, I wish you all the best.