EDITORIAL

FATHER ANGEL FERNANDEZ ARTIME

THE MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

# MAY BEAUTY BE REBORN

# IN OUR WORLD EVERY DAY

I gaze from this window that the *Salesian Bulletin* offers me every month and greet my Salesian brothers, all those who belong to our family spread throughout the world, and so many friends of Don Bosco who remain close to him and love him in our many Salesian houses.

 The central thought of my message this time is the Salesian way of seeing things. How we see life, the world, and the young through Don Bosco’s eyes is and must always be the vision of one who believes in the seeds of good and kindness that are in the heart of every individual, every youth, every father and mother.

 To reinforce what I want to say and give it both light and shadow, let me begin my reflection with a page we find at various Internet sites, a page that’s copied over and over. It describes our age as one full of contradictions and paradoxes.

 The text runs this way:

 *“The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but lower moral standards; wider highways but narrower viewpoints.*

 *“We spend more but have less. We buy more but enjoy less. We have bigger houses and smaller families, more conveniences but less time.*

 *“We have more degrees but less common sense, more knowledge but less judgment, more experts and still more problems, more medicine but less well-being.*

 *“We drive too fast, get too angry, stay up too late, get up tired, read too little, watch too much TV, and pray too seldom.*

 *“We’ve multiplied our possessions but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too little, and hate too often. We’ve learned how to make a living but not how to live. We’ve added years to our lives but not life to our years.*

 *“We’ve gone to the moon and back but have trouble crossing the street to welcome a new neighbor. We’ve conquered outer space but not our interior space. We’ve done larger things but not better ones. We’ve cleaned the air but polluted our souls. We’ve mastered the atom but not our prejudices. We write more but learn less.*

 *“We plan more but accomplish less. We’ve learned to rush but not to wait. We build bigger computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but we communicate less and less.*

 *“These are times of fast food and slow digestion, big men and small character, huge profits and shallow relationships. These are times of two incomes and more divorce, fancier houses and broken homes. There’s a lot in the window and nothing in the store.”*

 The text goes on along similar lines to describe the *paradoxes of our time*. I must admit that some of these contrasts are accurate. But what I want to emphasize is that the only world that we have here on this earth is this one, not some imaginary world that we can yearn for nostalgically.

 We have only the world in which we wake up every day, and the most courageous, serious, and profound attitude of a Christian and Salesian heart is to look at this reality with hopeful eyes, to discover all the positive signs hidden in it and transform them as much as possible.

 This is a true *commandment* for our Salesian heart when it comes to the education and evangelization of the young.

 When we’re dealing with young men and women, our fundamental task is to work, with all the energy of our faith, so that the absolute value of individual persons and their inviolability should prevail; that value outranks every material good and every structure.

 This strong conviction, put in today’s language but with the *same passion for education that inspired Don Bosco*, allows us to look critically at all the situations in our world that are ethically inadmissible (like corruption, the exploitation of people, violence, fraud, abuse) and to make strong personal and communal choices to stand up to against these ruthless mechanisms of manipulation.

 It’s natural that in the face of these realties we might sometimes feel overwhelmed by so much that’s negative, by that part of life that disgusts us. But as believers we can’t allow this to weaken our *hope*. On the contrary, we need to dare to announce more intensely that this is more than ever the hour of real hope! This doesn’t mean closing our eyes to injustices, but opening our hearts, thanks to faith, to the God of Life who never goes out of fashion or disappears in the distance, and immersing ourselves in daily life, firmly believing that we can help make it better.

 This is possible thanks to the activity of the Risen Lord and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our history, a history of lights and shadows that’s never beyond God’s reach. In n. 276 of *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis says explicitly: “Christ’s resurrection is not an event of the past; it contains a vital power which has permeated this world. Where all seems to be dead, signs of the resurrection suddenly spring up. It is an irresistible force. Often it seems that God does not exist: all around us we see persistent injustice, evil, indifference and cruelty. But it is also true that in the midst of darkness something new always springs to life and sooner or later produces fruit. On razed land life breaks through, stubbornly yet invincibly. However dark things are, goodness always re-emerges and spreads. Each day in our world beauty is born anew; it rises transformed through the storms of history.”

 And this is the certainty of our Faith: the Lord of History is active in our history, through the contribution of our own effort and mission as educators and evangelizers. We feel an intimate solidarity with this world of ours and its history. Because for us—Salesians, Christian educators, parents who believe in education—*to educate means to participate lovingly in the growth of every individual, in the building of his or her future.*

 Let our every step, here and now, truly be a sign of this vital task.

 My heartfelt and sincere greetings,

 Fr. Angel Fernandez Artime, Rector Major