

The
Preventive
System
of
Saint
John Bosco

Fr. Seán Murphy, S.D.B.

THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM OF SAINT JOHN BOSCO (1)

Why did St. John Bosco choose this system of working with young people?

The following incidents in the life of John Bosco influenced his choice of work and the method he used to do it.

- His experience of the ways priests and teachers and adults treated children.
- The dream he had when he was nine years old.

THE FIRST INCIDENT.

John Bosco and his mother walked along the dirt road into the glowing sunset. Towards them came a priest, his long cassock flapping in the evening breeze. To John Bosco it seemed that he just walked out of the sunset, trailing beams of light.

As they got closer, John Bosco's face broke into a big smile, and his small voice piped clearly: "Hello, Father."

The priest gravely bowed his head and passed by.

John Bosco said to his mother; "Mom, he didn't even see me."

She replied: "Priests are busy, John. They have no time for little boys."

John answered: "But Jesus had time for children. Mom, when I become a priest I will always have time for children."

Margaret Bosco smiled. Her little son John a priest? Well, and why not?

He is bright and he knows and loves his catechism and prayers. If only he could go to school..... if only his father was still alive..... if only we had a bit of money.

THE SECOND INCIDENT.

The dream John Bosco had when he was 9 years old.

"The Dream" happened soon after. "The dream" John used to call it because it mapped out his entire life. It seemed to him that he was playing with his friends on the slope just outside his house. The boys broke into a quarrel, cursing and swearing. He tried to stop them. He plunged into their midst and wildly swung his fists.

Then a 'man' appeared, saying "Not that way, son, you must win them over with kindness and love. I shall give you a teacher under whose guidance you will be able to become wise, and without whom, all wisdom becomes nonsense"

John Asked: "Who are you?"

He answered: "You may not know me, but you know my Mother."

A beautiful lady glided into the dream. She drew John to herself and said: "Watch what I do."

She stretched out her hands. The boys turned into a pack of snarling beasts. John clung to her side. She put out her hands again. Now the beasts changed into beautiful lambs that nibbled at the boy's fingers.

He asked: "What does this mean?"

She answered: "Some day you will understand. Just now be humble, be strong, be courageous."

The dream vanished. John awoke to the poverty of the Bosco farm.

From that moment Mary, the Mother of Jesus, guided John Bosco during his whole life and in all his work for children and young people.

From that moment John Bosco never forgot that vision and that vocation. He prepared himself with enthusiasm, perseverance and fidelity, even though he encountered many problems and obstacles in preparing to be priest.

THE OPPRESSIVE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION.

- ❖ The system of education at the time of John Bosco was known as the OPPRESSIVE SYSTEM and was based on the following:
 - The rules are made known.
 - The punishments for not keeping the rules are made known.
 - Failure to keep them is punished.
 - It is based the following:
 - threats
 - fear
 - punishment.
 - Those in charge must always appear severe and threatening and must not be friendly with those for whom they are working.
 - This system is easy and less troublesome for those in charge.
- ❖ Even as a child John Bosco was unhappy with this system. He was unhappy with the lack of friendliness and aloofness of priests and teachers.

THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM OF ST. JOHN BOSCO.

- ❖ John Bosco's System, which he called the PREVENTIVE SYSTEM, was not something which he had worked out fully before he started his work with young people.

- ❖ It gradually developed from his experience of what the human person is, and from his experience of working with young people.
- ❖ It is based on the following:
 - **God is unconditional love.**
 - **God created people in his own image.**
 - **Therefore he created them for a life of love.**
 - **Jesus is the visible sign of this love of God.**
 - **Jesus taught us that true love means total self-giving.**
 - **St. Francis de Sales (1567 -1622) based all his work of bringing Catholics, who had left the Church and joined other churches, back to the Catholic Church on loving-kindness. In this work Francis de Sales was physically attacked, insulted, opposed with violence, but he continued his work with great love, kindness and patience. He never took revenge. He helped many to find their way back to the Catholic Church.**
 - **John Bosco (1815–1888) knew St. Francis de Sales by reading about him in books.**
 - **He liked very much this way of St. Francis de Sales and took him as his role model. St John Bosco based his spirit and way of working with people on loving-kindness.**

- ❖ **The PREVENTIVE SYSTEM of St. John Bosco is based on:**
 - REASON (dialogue)
 - RELIGION
 - LOVING-KINDNESS
 - It appeals to the resources of the mind.
 - it appeals to the resources of the heart,
 - and it appeals to the desire for God in every person's heart..
- ❖ John Bosco **lived with** the boys and young people of the first oratory in Turin, Italy, a **spiritual** and **educational** experience, which helped them to grow as good citizens and faithful disciples of Christ.
- ❖ He called this THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM.
- ❖ John Bosco has passed on to us a way of **living** and of **handing** on the Gospel message and of **working** with and through young people that helps their human development and eternal salvation.
- ❖ By his presence full of loving-kindness and care among young people John Bosco prevented them from falling into temptation and evil.
- ❖ John Bosco has left us a way of behaving and a way of proclaiming the Gospel and of working with young people which helps them to grow as good people and genuine disciples of Jesus.
- ❖ His System:

- ✚ should permeate our approach to God.
- ✚ should permeate all our personal relationships,
- ✚ should permeate our manner of living in community through the exercise of charity that knows how to make itself loved.
- ✚ This community may be:
 - the religious community.
 - the family community.
 - the school community.
 - the youth club community.
 - the Parish community.
 - the workplace community.
- ✚ It must inspire our whole existence.

- ❖ The PREVENTIVE SYSTEM of St. John Bosco means
 - to live among young people with a loving presence.
 - to get to know them.
Jesus said: "The good shepherd knows his sheep, and calls them by name."
 - to get to know their backgrounds, social and family.
 - to get to know their problems.
 - to get to know their culture.

❖ **The PREVENTIVE SYSTEM is a matter of the heart.**

- We must master the art of being physically present among young people in a loving kindly way and accept the sacrifices it may entail, and be convinced that genuine human life needs self-giving; it needs giving one's life for others.
- John Bosco encouraged activity, games, running, singing, drama, everything except sin. And he was present always among them in the midst of all this activity and noise.
Other priests though he was mad! They even tried to have him locked up in a mental hospital!
- There was discipline also. It was a discipline based on love.
They knew that he loved them, and that he was their friend and they were happy to obey and co-operate with him.

❖ The PREVENTIVE SYSTEM of St. John Bosco means:

- to work **with** and **for** the young.
- to involve **them** in realising **their** plan of life
- to respect the dignity of each person.
- to be aware that each person is a child of God.

THE FIRST PILLAR OF THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM OF ST. JOHN BOSCO IS: REASON OR REASONABLENESS AND DIALOGUE

John Bosco shows us that when we act reasonably with young people, we are appealing to their intelligence.

- ❖ We encourage them to **reflect** on their lives.
- ❖ We challenge them to accept **responsibility** for their lives.
- ❖ We accept them **as they are** but encourage them **to grow**.

SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS:

1. Explain to the young people why you do what you are doing.
 - ✚ Do not take for granted that they immediately grasp the reasons for your actions and the demands that you make on them.
 - ✚ Enable them to respond to what you are asking because they see it is good and reasonable, not because of fear of punishment.

2. Clearly make known your rules and requirements.
 - ✚ Young people often break rules without realising it.
 - ✚ Take time to make clear what is expected.
 - ✚ They forget easily, so give frequent reminders.

3. Keep your rules simple and easy to remember.
 - ✚ Endless lists of complex rules are never remembered.
 - ✚ They become oppressive and breed resentment.
 - ✚ Keep it simple.

4. Understand what is going on inside young people so that you can act reasonably with them.
 - ✚ They are growing and maturing.
 - ✚ They are searching for their own identity.
 - ✚ They are influenced by peer pressure.
 - ✚ They are straining for freedom and independence from adults.
 - ✚ They are searching for role models.

5. Be reasonable in what you require of young people.
 - ✚ It should not be too difficult.
 - ✚ It should not be childish.
 - ✚ It should not seem as if you are taking revenge on them.

6. Be at your place before the young people arrive.

- ✚ This can avoid a lot of disorder.
- ✚ Be in the classroom, in recreation, or hall before them or accompany them to the place they should be.

7. Be with the young people all the time.

- ✚ Remain with the young people for the entire time you are responsible for them.

8. Use their life experience as a frame of reference.

- ✚ Young people love to talk about themselves.
- ✚ By using their present reality and their hopes for the future as a constant frame of reference, you will find they will listen to you more easily.

9. Find the positive and build on it.

- ✚ Young people would rather look at their good points and talents than at their faults and defects.
- ✚ By starting with their good qualities and what they can do well, you can more easily help them face their faults and weaknesses and their need for changing them.

10. Let them lead.

- ✚ Whenever possible, in every kind of activity, try to let the young people take an active role in planning and carrying out the project.
- ✚ The more involved they are, the more cooperative they will be.
- ✚ While planning, and taking the lead, they will learn new skills.

11. Set learning goals and help them to learn something from every activity.

12. Encourage questions and suggestions.

- ✚ Young people do not always assume their questions are welcome.
- ✚ Adults are often not pleased when young people offer them suggestions.

- + Invite questions and suggestions. Sometimes their ideas may be better than your own!

13. Do not correct young people in public.

- + It is better to correct in private.
- + Public correction can cause embarrassment and resentment.

14. If you must punish, punish reasonably.

- + When an educator has been able to win the confidence of young people, punishments are rarely needed. It is often enough to let them know you are disappointed.
- + Physical punishment must not be used.
- + Give the punishment when you are calm and reasonable, not when you are angry or upset.
- + Make it clear that you are not taking revenge.

15. Praise more than find fault.

- + When you are generous in praising your young people, they know that you really see them and esteem them as persons and they accept your corrections more easily.
- + It is not a question of neglecting correction, but of balancing it with attention to positive qualities.

16. Encourage group evaluation and a sharing what they learned.

- + At the end of a good day or a bad day, a game won or lost, invite the young people to assess their activity and performance and to share what they have learned.
- + You thereby create an environment where even failures become learning opportunities.
- + When learning is shared, everyone learns more.

17. Develop critical reflection skills.

- + Many adults simply pass on to young people their own understanding of ideas, events and issues.
- + Help the young people to reflect for themselves and to form their own views. They need to develop these much needed skills. Realise

also that as these skills are developed, they may also be critical of ourselves!

- ✚ Input may be necessary where views are expressed which are very contrary to human dignity and Gospel teaching.
- ✚ Help young boys to understand that all kinds of abuse, violence and cruelty are contrary to true manhood.
- ✚ Help young girls to be aware of their dignity and not to be afraid to say 'no' decisively.

18. Share your difficulties with your colleagues.

- ✚ Share your problems with your co-workers.
- ✚ We each have experiences, insights and ideas that can benefit one another.
- ✚ No one needs to suffer in silence.

19. Be consistent.

- ✚ As an individual try to even tempered and predictable in your attitude and reactions.
- ✚ The whole group should also try to have a reasonable pattern of response and standards of behaviour.
- ✚ If each one has widely differing expectations, widely different standards of behavior and patterns of response, we confuse the young people.

20. Be reasonable with yourself.

- ✚ Do not try to do more than you can.
- ✚ Do not be afraid to ask for help.
- ✚ Do not fail to rest when you need it.
- ✚ It is difficult to be a calm and friendly presence among the young people when you are tired.

POINTS FOR REFLECTION:

1. What suggestions do you find most helpful?
2. When you reflect on the various activities in our schools and communities and homes, and on the way we do them, are some things unreasonable? Which?

THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM OF ST. JOHN BOSCO (2)

The second pillar of the Preventive System of St. John Bosco is RELIGION.

1. What is religion?

- ❖ Normally, when we speak of religion or a person's relationship with God, we usually associate it with various doctrines, practices, ceremonies and customs that are part of all religions. These external and visible signs are important and necessary, because we are human being made up of body and spirit, and the wish we have to give visible expression to our faith that is within us.
- ❖ But religion is much more than these external expressions.
 - Religion is first and foremost in the depths of a person's conscience,
 - in the depths of one's being,
 - in the heart,
 - for in every human being there is an innate longing for God.
 - Religion means being aware of the presence of God in nature, in human life and in human history.
- ❖ Religion means to acknowledge God as Creator, as Redeemer, and to live in the light of this conviction and to model one's daily life in line with this belief.
 - Religion is far deeper than external practices.
 - Religion shows itself also and especially in the ordinary events of daily life. Often these apparently human events take on a religious character and become experiences of God. Through them people are able to cope with the many mysteries that form part of human life: pain, sickness, the challenges with which a person meets, success and failure, etc.
- ❖ This is how religion seeks to save the person from a meaningless life, from a life of despair, from a life with no values, from a life with no convictions, from a life with no responsibility and commitment. It gives a person's life meaning which flows into actions, and in this way a person grows in freedom and love.

2. Don Bosco and Religion.

- ❖ Don Bosco made religion one of the three pillars of his Preventive System, together with reason (reasonableness and dialogue) and loving-kindness.

- These three elements influence each other.
 - Religion must permeate reason and loving-kindness giving them a much deeper dimension and in turn must be permeated by them.
 - This is why religion takes first place in Don Bosco's system.
- ❖ Don Bosco was convinced that the educator's loving-kindness must be inspired by charity, by pastoral charity which has its roots in the love of God and its model in the life and Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Only then, he was convinced, will it be able to blossom into a love which is more than just a warm friendship or which might be just emotional.
 - Through this genuine love the educator will recognise the intrinsic value of each young person in the eyes of God and respect the mystery of his/her life and destiny.
- ❖ Reason should be guided by religious motives.
- For him, education is a process based on the love of God and in the end leading to God.
 - The discipline he was able to obtain at the Oratory was the fruit of religion.
 - He inspired the boys with the conviction that each one was created in the image of God from which flowed a deep respect for themselves and others.
 - When an English Government minister, on a visit to the Oratory at Turin, asked in amazement how it was possible to obtain the sense of responsibility and co-operation that he noticed in the young people, Don Bosco spoke of religious convictions and practice being a powerful means of education. John Bosco told him: "It is either religion or the stick."

3. The practice of religion at the Oratory.

Religion at the Oratory was something all-encompassing; it permeated and influenced every activity and came to be expressed in a variety of ways, among which we might mention the following:

- ❖ A religious climate.
- ✚ The educators – priests, students and lay co-workers – contributed to it by their good lives.

- ✚ So did public signs like statues, pictures, crucifixes and short inspiring verses on the walls.
 - ✚ Pope Paul IV said that the secret of Don Bosco's success lay in the fact that he introduced the boys to God, not only through the door of the chapel, but through the door of the workshop and the playground as well.
- ❖ A religious outlook on life.
- Everything at the Oratory was lived and done in the light of the teaching of God and in his service. There was much insistence on the loving presence of God and on the response of obedience and love. This was the religious source of the happiness that was to be found at the Oratory. The motto was: "Serve the Lord in gladness."
- ❖ A solid catechetical instruction.
- ✚ This meant learning the Catholic faith.
 - ✚ It took place during class-hours on weekdays and was part of the programme on Sundays. Further impetus was given to it on special occasions like novenas, triduums and the months in honour of various devotions.
- ❖ Religious practices.
- ✚ At the Oratory there were the usual practices of piety: daily prayer in the morning and evening, prayers before and after meals, prayers before classes and work, daily Mass, devotion to the Blessed Virgin and to the saints.
- ❖ Sacramental life.
- ✚ Don Bosco put great stress on the Sacrament of Penance and the Sacrament of the Eucharist as a means of creating and deepening one's relationship with Jesus. Confessions out in the open in the playground were common. The young people left their games and went to John Bosco at the side of the playground for confession.
- ❖ Apostolic commitment.
- ✚ Don Bosco set up various apostolic groups (sodalities) so that the young people could be active both within the setting of the Oratory and outside as well. We wanted the young people to be apostles to other young people. When there was an outbreak of cholera in Turin many of the boys chose to give a helping hand even though there was danger of contracting the disease.

❖ The striving for holiness.

- ✚ Don Bosco stressed that all are called to holiness. He presented the striving for holiness as the path for all Christians and stressed that every Christian could become holy.
- ✚ What is holiness? Holiness is a life filled with love.
- ✚ He convinced his boys that it was easy to become holy, because it did not require them to do extraordinary things, but only to perform their daily duties well and out of love for God.

A YOUTH SPIRITUALITY.

A spirituality is a way of living our faith.

Don Bosco created a youth spirituality.

This spirituality aims at helping young people to integrate their faith with their daily life. It is summed up in the following five points:

❖ A Spirituality of ordinary daily life.

- ✚ We find God in the ordinary events of daily life. We find God by doing the duties of our daily lives well. We create and deepen our relationship with God by seeing his presence in our daily lives and in our interaction with the people we meet in our daily lives.

❖ A spirituality of joy and optimism.

- ✚ Daily life is lived out in a simple, serene and happy form of holiness which brings together in a single vital experience the joyful daily rough and tumble of the playground, serious study, prayer and a constant sense of duty. St. John Bosco encouraged activity, games, running, jumping, and he put up with the happy noisy activity in the Oratory. Other priests thought he was mad. They even tried to put him in a mental hospital.

❖ A spirituality of friendship with Jesus.

- ✚ He tried to help them to put Jesus at the centre of their lives.
- ✚ Daily life is lived out in a relationship of friendship with Jesus who is seen as Friend, Teacher and Saviour and in whom is found the fullest meaning of life.

❖ A spiritual of communion in the Church.

- ✚ Christian faith means life in the Christian community.
- ✚ In the Church we grow in faith through the Sacraments, through our unity with the others members and through shared responsibility for the work of the Church.

In the Church too we find Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who goes in front of us, accompanies us and inspires us.

❖ A spirituality of responsible service.

- ✚ Humble self-giving is at the heart of genuine faith.
- ✚ Our life of faith is a daily effort to overcome our selfishness by giving ourselves for others.

THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM OF ST. JOHN BOSCO (3)

LOVING-KINDNESS.

Loving-kindness the third key element of the Preventive System of St. John Bosco. This is the important principle in the Preventive System.

- ❖ Loving-kindness means first and foremost loving relationships.
- ❖ Its foundation and source is the love of God.
- ❖ The educator loves young people with the same love with which God loves them.
- ❖ Love must become visible.
John Bosco said; "It is not enough to love the young people. They must know that they are loved."
- ❖ Education is a matter of the heart. In other words mutual trust is indispensable for the work of education.
- ❖ Mutual trust grows out of love.
- ❖ Love comes from closeness.
- ❖ Closeness takes place through **presence**.
- ❖ A calm relaxed familiar relationship.
- ❖ Affections shown by signs and gestures.
- ❖ Help young people to be aware of their self-worth, to develop **self-esteem**.
- ❖ Suggest ideals to the young people and encourage them to overcome weaknesses.

Creation of an educational environment:

- ❖ Create an atmosphere rich in joy, games, participation, humanity.
- ❖ Create commitment and responsibility.
- ❖ Create community.
- ❖ Create a programme, a process in which young people mature and develop.
- ❖ Create a family atmosphere.
- ❖ Create a trusting atmosphere.

John Bosco said: "Education is a matter of the heart."

- ❖ Education is not just learning facts.
- ❖ Education is not just passing examinations.
- ❖ Very often at the present time all over the world education is a matter of the mind only. In many countries passing examination is the only aim of education.
- ❖ John Bosco stressed that education is a matter of the mind and the heart.

- ❖ When we say that education is a matter of the heart we mean that by education we want to help children and young people to grow up to be **good people**, not just people who have the skills to do certain works only.
- ❖ Education is learning to live. Education is learning to live in community. Education is learning right behavior in community.
- ❖ Learning to live means empowering young people to be able to create loving, caring, non-possessive, non-exploitive relationships in their adult life.
- ❖ There cannot be real human relationships if the other person is treated as an object only.
- ❖ There cannot be real human relationships without freedom.
- ❖ Realise the importance of freedom in relationships between young men and young women.
- ❖ Patriarchal attitudes have to disappear. The culture where men are considered to have a higher dignity than women must be overcome completely.

Therefore a personal encounter is important.

- ❖ Personal contacts.
- ❖ Knowing the young people.
- ❖ Knowing their family and social backgrounds.
- ❖ An encounter begins with some signs of esteem, affection, and understanding.
- ❖ We encounter the young people in their present stage of freedom.

The educational relationship.

- ❖ The person is responsible for his/her own growth and development.
- ❖ The task of the educator is not to take this responsibility on himself/herself, but to **awaken** it, **enlighten** it and get it **functioning** by fostering and making it possible for the young person to make free choices based on proper motives and values. The word 'educate' comes from the Latin 'educare' which means to 'draw out', not to 'pour in'. Education is not a task of pouring knowledge into the mind. Education means to draw out what is already there and to arouse in the young people the longing and the determination to learn.
- ❖ The educator accompanies and encourages.
- ❖ It is a question of influential presence and accompaniment.
- ❖ The educator plays a valid part to the extent that he/she is able by his/her adult presence to offer light and experience and to be seen as a 'model' to whom they can refer.
- ❖ The educator must totally accept the person as he/she is.

- ❖ The point at which we find them is the point from which God has chosen to invite them to start a lifelong journey.
- ❖ Be aware of God's patience which we must try to imitate.
- ❖ Suggestions should take into account the point where the person is at that time.

PRESENCE

Presence is a very important aspect of the Preventive System.

John Bosco saw loving-kindness primarily as an active, friendly presence of the educator among the young people. And he called this kind of presence '**assistance**'.

Fr. Lemoyne, who wrote the life of St. John Bosco, said that his love for the young was such that "he himself was always with them, going from one group to another. Without their being aware of it, he sounded them out, to discover their moral character and needs. He would whisper confidentially to one boy or to another give some spiritual advice or an invitation to approach the sacraments, or he would linger with those who seemed to be lonely and try to cheer them up with some joke. He himself was always cheerful and smiling, though nothing ever escaped his vigilant eye." (BM 111, pp.79-80)

And again he told the young people: "I am here every moment of the day and night for you." (MB VII, pp 302).

THE PROTECTIVE FUNCTION OF ASSISTANCE.

The negative aspect of presence.

John Bosco was unashamedly **optimistic** when appealing to the sense of responsibility of young people. He said: "Even the most callous boys have a soft spot." It is up to the educator to help the person to discover it.

But he was very **realistic**. He told his teachers and assistants that 'boys break rules more through thoughtlessness than through malice, more through lack of proper supervision than through evil intent.'

(MB IV, p.386). He was also aware of the spiritual condition of the young people when they came to his institutions. The Biographical Memoirs inform us that 'among the many boys entering the Oratory, there would unavoidably be some who were corrupt, worldly-minded, undisciplined, pleasure-loving, little inclined to piety, lazy, and even morally dangerous to the other boys.' (MB IV, p.395). Many were coming from prison and life on the streets.

Loving and caring presence was needed to prevent them from corrupting others.

THE POSITIVE FUNCTION OF ASSISTANCE.

But, while Assistance, according to the mind of John Bosco, did have a **protective function**, it has above all a **positive** and **constructive** function.

In his Confidential Directives to the rectors, he said: "Spend as much time as you can with your young people. Try to whisper a kind word to them privately, when you see the need." (BM X, p. 449).

The Preventive System of St. John Bosco means:

- ❖ Physical presence among the young people and hence a real sharing in their life and interests.
- ❖ A friendly presence; not as an authority figure.
- ❖ An active presence – protecting them from negative experiences and promoting positive action for their growth.
- ❖ An animating presence: foster action and creativity on the part of the young people, give them responsibility for their own growth and development and accompany them in the process of growing and maturing as persons.
- ❖ A witnessing presence: The values professed by the educator which become evident through his/her actions and behaviour, will make them reflect on their lives and open new horizons before their minds.

THE PRACTICAL FORMS OF ASSISTANCE

ASSISTANCE for John Bosco was not a matter of 'controlling', 'preventing' or 'containing' failure to keep the rules. That, according to John Bosco, would be more like the Oppressive System.

In concrete terms, **ASSISTANCE** as a loving, active presence entailed:

- ❖ **Taking the first step:** going out to meet the young, showing initiative and creativity, knowing how to build relationships.
- ❖ **Being with the young:** John Bosco told his boys: "Here in your midst I feel completely at home; for me, living means being here with you." (BM IV, p.455).
- ❖ **Conversing:** Entering into dialogue with the young on themes of interest to them.
- ❖ **Emphatising:** Showing an ability to understand deeply the feelings of the young people. Being on the same wavelength as they are. Liking what they like but not abandoning our adult role as educators.
- ❖ **Suggesting:** Proposing activities, giving ideas, offering advice, and encouraging them to share when in groups.
- ❖ **Bearing witness:** Showing through word and attitude the values one has made part of one's life, so that the young cannot fail to notice them; still more having a ready answer to justify the faith one professes.

“Reverence the Lord Christ in your hearts, and always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have.”
(I Peter 3:15).

- ❖ **Forestalling:** Being aware of the limitations and risks with which young people meet in growing up and being attentive and aware to whatever might harm them.
- ❖ **Creating a climate:** Building up an atmosphere of good values and relationships which help them to grow to maturity.
- ❖ **Accompanying:** Through patient dialogue helping the young people to internalize values and convictions, i.e. helping them to freely make values and convictions part of their daily living.
- ❖ **Making the young responsible:** Getting them to co-operate in building up the atmosphere of responsibility in whatever situation they are in.
- ❖ **Establishing new meeting points:** Encouraging community activities and celebrations like free time activities, outings, inter-group encounters, and youth celebrations.

There are three reactions to the world of youth:

1. A reaction of indifference – couldn't care less.
2. A negative reaction – condemnation, stress on defects and limitations.
3. A positive reaction – interest and love.
4. But we must be aware that not everything in the ideas and behaviour of the young can be approved of. There are errors, excesses and sometimes disorders found in them.

We reject everything in present day society that is not Christian, not according to the Gospel and often not even human.

We accept all the healthy aspects of their restless energy.

THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM OF ST. JOHN BOSCO (4)

It may appear from what we have learned so far that the Preventive System of St. John Bosco is meant for those who are involved with young people.

But we have seen that the Preventive System of St. John Bosco should permeate or influence every aspect of our lives.

- ❖ It should permeate our approach to God.
- ❖ It should permeate all our relationships.
- ❖ It should permeate our manner of living in community through the exercise of charity that knows how to make itself loved.

The community may be:

- ❖ the religious community,
- ❖ the family community,
- ❖ the school community,
- ❖ the youth club community,
- ❖ the Christian community, (parish)
- ❖ the workplace community.
- ❖ It must inspire our whole existence.

The three pillars of the Preventive System of St. John Bosco are reason or reasonableness (dialogue), religion and loving-kindness.

- ❖ We can see how important these three pillars are for family life.
- ❖ They are important especially at the present time when family relationships are so fragile.
- ❖ The Preventive System of St. John Bosco is a way for the members of the family to live the spirit of the Gospel in their families.

The Preventive System means:

- ❖ to live among people,
- ❖ to get to know them,
- ❖ Therefore, both parents should be present in their families.
- ❖ Their presence should be a loving, caring presence from the day of their marriage.
- ❖ In this way they will strengthen day by day their vows to live a life of faithful love for the whole of their lives.
- ❖ In this way they will also create a loving, serene, and peaceful atmosphere in their home which will have a very deep effect on the emotional, psychological and spiritual growth of their children.

The Preventive System is a matter of the heart.

- ❖ Parents must be physically present in their families in a loving, kindly and caring way and accept the sacrifices it may entail.
- ❖ To bring a new person into the world means responsibility.
- ❖ It means the responsibility of enabling this new person created in the image of God to develop into a mature person emotionally, psychologically, spiritually and physically.
- ❖ Parents should begin building a loving caring relationship with their children from the day they are born.
- ❖ This calls for self-giving love on the part of both parents.
- ❖ Parents must know their children and the children should know their parents.
- ❖ Children must **experience** the love of their parents and thus conclude that they are **lovable**.
- ❖ This builds **self-esteem**.
- ❖ Self-esteem is vital for them to be able to build relationships with others in later life.

THE FIRST PILLAR OF THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM OF ST. JOHN BOSCO IS REASON (REASONABLENESS, DIALOGUE)

- ❖ Dialogue is necessary between husband and wife.
- ❖ Reasonableness and dialogue are necessary between parents and children especially when they grow older.
But it must be there from the beginning.
If it is not there from the beginning, the children won't listen to them later as teenagers when they are striving for independence but still in need of guidance.

SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS:

- ❖ Talk to your children and explain to them the reasons for what you ask them to do.
- ❖ Help them obey what you want them to do because they see it is good and reasonable and not because of fear of punishment.
- ❖ Remind them often of what you expect of them. They forget easily.
- ❖ Understand what is going on inside your children as they grow and mature.
- ❖ Help them to grow to be good citizens and good Catholics.
- ❖ Don't always be complaining about their weaknesses. Be aware of their strengths and talents also and affirm them. By affirming the good qualities that they have and what they can do well, you will more easily help them to face their faults and weaknesses and convince them on the need to overcome them. This is what growing and maturing means.
- ❖ Praise more than correct. When you are generous in praising your children, they know you really see them and esteem them as persons and they accept your corrections more easily.

It is not a question of neglecting correction, but of balancing it with attention to positive qualities.

THE SECOND PILLAR OF THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM OF ST. JOHN BOSCO IS RELIGION.

When we speak about religion we mean living in the way that Jesus showed us in his Gospel.

- ❖ Religion means:
 - knowing our faith,
 - celebrating our faith
 - and living our faith in daily life.
 - The life of faith is a lifelong journey with Jesus in the Christian community, guided by his teachings, striving to help others to join us on this journey and to commit themselves to Jesus, reaching out to the world in which we live in a living caring way.
 - Therefore, on this journey of faith with Jesus in the Christian community we are called:
 - ✓ to know Jesus and to deepen our knowledge of him and to build a loving relationship with him.
 - ✓ to practice this faith in the family and in the Christian community and in all areas of life.
- ❖ The Catholic Church has always stressed that the parents are the first teachers of the faith to their children.
- ❖ Religion seeks to free people from a **meaningless** life, from a life of no **values**, from a life of no **convictions**, from a life of no **responsibility** and **commitment**. It gives a person's life meaning which flows into actions and gives freedom and love.
- ❖ **Parents must be good shepherds in their families,**
 - leading by good example,
 - leading by making Jesus the centre of their family life,
 - leading by making Jesus and his Gospel known in the family,
 - leading by striving to live the Gospel of love in their families.
 - They should create a religious climate in the family by having set times for prayers, by reading the word of God and by coming to Mass together on Sundays.
 - This kind of co-operation of the part of the parents is essential if the teaching of catechism in the Parish is to be fruitful.

THE PRACTICE OF RELIGION IN THE FAMILY:

It should influence every aspect of family life.

Parents should strive to create a **religious climate** in the family:

- ❖ by the example of their own lives.

- ❖ by a religious outlook on life: awareness of God's loving presence.
- ❖ by ensuring that their children know their faith.
- ❖ by being faithful to prayer in the home and in the church.
- ❖ by being faithful to the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist as sure means of creating and deepening one's relationship with Jesus.
- ❖ by being generous to the poor and making sure that the children are aware of what they do for the poor and why they do it.
- ❖ By striving for holiness. Don Bosco stressed that **all** are called to holiness by doing all the **ordinary** things of daily life well and out of love for God.

THE THIRD PILLAR OF THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM OF ST. JOHN BOSCO IS LOVING-KINDNESS:

This is essential in family life.

- ❖ Loving-kindness means first and foremost loving relationships.
- ❖ Its foundation and source is the love of God.
- ❖ Love must be visible in the family.
- ❖ Mutual trust grows out of love.
- ❖ Love comes from closeness.
- ❖ Closeness takes place through presence.
- ❖ Loving presence creates loving relationships.
- ❖ Parents must realise that their loving, caring presence in the home is more important than **anything** else they can give their children.
- ❖ Parents must create an atmosphere in the family full of love, care, serenity, joy, peace, harmony.
- ❖ Loving presence is very important in the Preventive System.
- ❖ Loving presence is very important in family life.
- ❖ Parents are called to a self-giving presence in their families.
- ❖ Work is important but it is not more important than having time at home with the family. Parents must ensure a work-family balance.
- ❖ Sometimes parents spoil their children by giving them every material thing they ask for to keep them quiet.
- ❖ Sometimes parents try to avoid the sacrifice of giving themselves and their time to their children by giving them things.
- ❖ What children need **most** of all is the loving, caring, self-giving presence of their parents.

Parents should strive to create homes

- where children know that they are loved,
- where they are trained to realise that love is not just receiving but also giving,
- where their desire to give becomes stronger than their desire to receive,
- where self-giving becomes a way of life.

- The greatest task of parents is to help their children to grow out of being selfish persons into self-giving persons.
 - To do this they have to be striving themselves to grow out of being selfish persons into self-giving persons. And it is the task of a lifetime.
- ❖ Parents should be able:
- to sit down with their children,
 - to relax with their children,
 - to discuss matters with their children,
 - to help them to be aware of the dangers and temptations which surround them,
 - to help them to build up their self-esteem so that they are not overwhelmed by peer pressure.