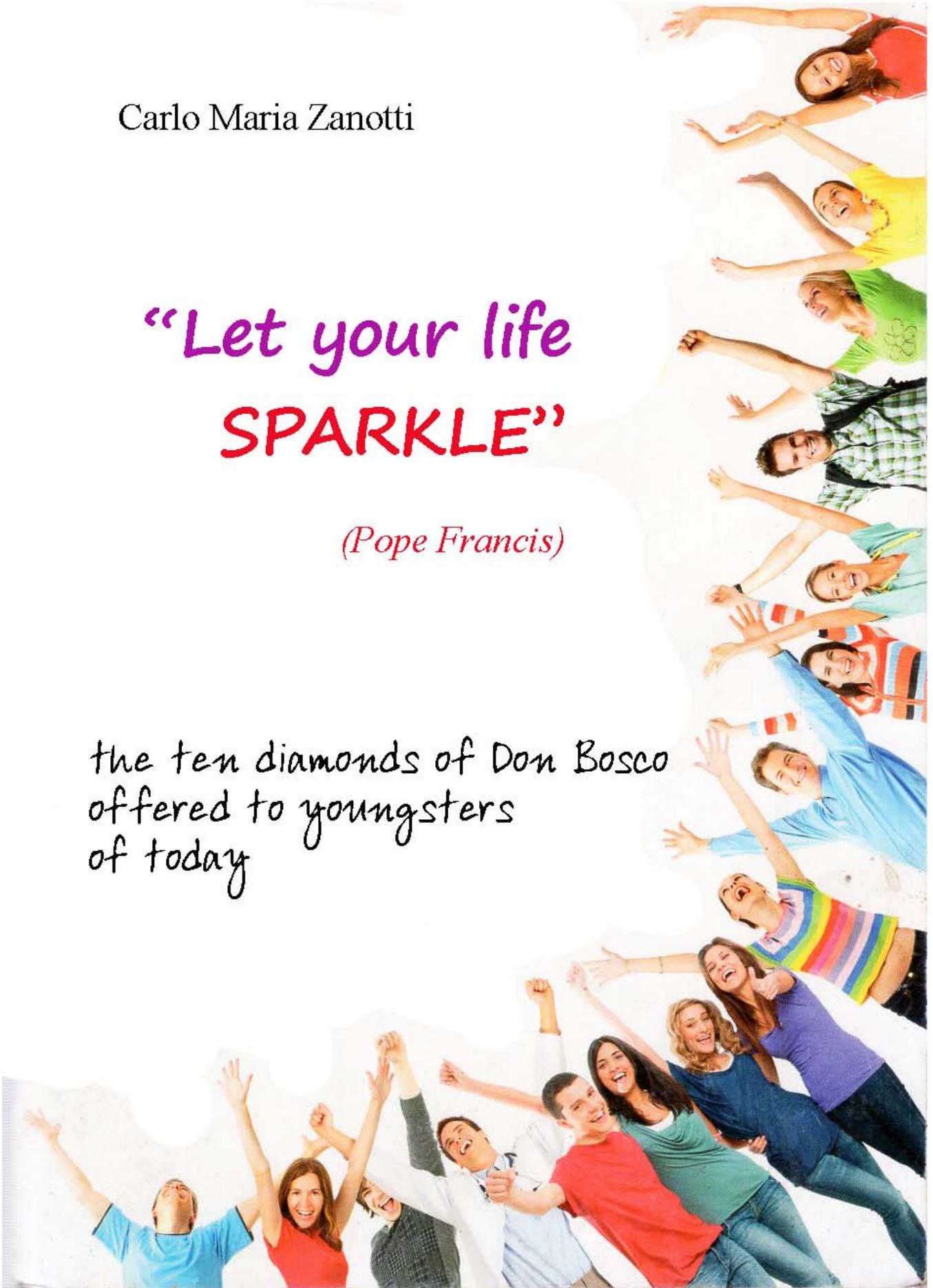


Carlo Maria Zanotti

“Let your life
SPARKLE”

(Pope Francis)

the ten diamonds of Don Bosco
offered to youngsters
of today



“Let your life sparkle”

Pope Francis

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Introduction

The Salesian Life that I have experienced and my love for Don Bosco, for his spiritual and educational work, have convinced me that this wisdom and preciousness must be made known and shared.

The dream of the ten diamonds that Don Bosco handed down to us is the fundamental vision of life and an authoritative identity card of a Salesian.

The dream impressed Don Bosco so much that “he was not content with narrating it verbally, he also put it down in writing.”

The contents of the dream of the ten diamonds, certainly serve all times and seasons, to guide the reflection, the review of life and the formation of Salesians. But they also offer an inspiration to anyone who wants to practice “the most essential virtues” for a genuine Christian life.

Here then, is a proposed re-reading of the Dream presented to young people, to assist them on their journey of faith that leads to Life.

The sole purpose of this little booklet is to “hand down” to young people a precious gift, the rich heritage of Don Bosco’s experience which will help youngsters in their self-realization as persons and as Christians and therefore towards happiness. It is a beautiful and valuable gift: the ten diamonds!

Thanks to all the Salesian novices who, in recent years, on their “journey” of sacrifices, commitment, joy and enthusiasm have nourished even more my love for Don Bosco and his spiritual experience.

I hope that every young person can, by reading these pages, become “rich” because s/he has that diamond that brings happiness and life in abundance: Christ Jesus!

Happy Journey!

THE DREAM OF THE PERSON WITH THE TEN DIAMONDS

Spiritus Sancti gratia illuminet sensus et corda nostra, Amen [May the grace of the Holy Spirit enlighten our minds and hearts, Amen].

A TEACHING FOR THE PIOUS SALESIAN SOCIETY

On September 10 of this year 1881, the day the Church dedicates to the glorious name of Mary, the Salesians were assembled at San Benigno Canavese for their spiritual retreat.

“The model of a true Salesian”

On the night of September 10-11, while I was asleep, I dreamed that I was in a richly adorned hall.

I seemed to be strolling up and down its length with the directors of our houses when *a man of majestic mien* – so majestic that none of us could fix our gaze on him – appeared among us. Glancing at us in utter silence, he too started to pace the hall several steps from us.

He was clad in *a rich mantle* or cape closed at the front of the neck with a scarf from which a ribbon hung down on his chest.

The scarf was inscribed in luminous letters: *Pia Salesianorum Societas anno 1881* [The Pious Salesian Society in 1881]; on the ribbon were the words; *qualis esse debet* [what it ought to be].

Ten diamonds of extraordinary size and brilliance adorning that august person kept our gaze from being fixed upon him.

Three of the diamonds he wore on his *chest*: on one was written the word Faith, on another was written Hope, and the third over his heart bore the word Charity.

The fourth diamond, affixed to his right shoulder, was inscribed Work; the fifth, on his left shoulder, read Temperance. The remaining *five diamonds* adorning the back of his cloak were set into a quadrangle.

The largest and most brilliant sparkled in the very center, and on it was written Obedience.

The diamond to its upper right read Vow of Poverty.

And that below it, Reward.

On the diamond to the upper left was written Vow of Chastity; its sparkle had a brilliance all its own and drew our gaze as a magnet attracts iron.

Beneath it was a diamond inscribed Fasting.

These four diamonds focused their dazzling rays upon the one in the center.

Some illustrative maxims

Their rays, resembling tongues of fire, flickered upward, forming various maxims.

The *diamond Faith* emitted rays with the words: "Take up the shield of faith that you may fight against the devil's wiles." Another ray proclaimed:

"Faith without works is dead. Not the hearers but the doers of the law will possess the kingdom of God."

On the rays of Hope were the words: "Hope is in the Lord, not in men. Let your hearts rest where true joys are found."

The rays of Charity read: "Bear one another's burdens if you want to fulfil My law. Love and you shall be loved. Love your souls and the souls of your charges. Recite the Divine Office devoutly, celebrate Mass attentively, visit the Holy of Holies with great love."

On the word Work: "The remedy for concupiscence, a powerful weapon against the devil's wiles."

On Temperance: "Remove the fuel and the fire will die out. Make a pact with your eyes, with your cravings, your sleeping, lest these enemies plunder your souls. Self-gratification and chastity cannot co-exist."

On the rays of Obedience: "The foundation of the whole edifice and a précis of sanctity."

On the rays of Poverty: "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Riches are thorns. Poverty is not made of words but is in the hearts and deeds. Poverty will open the gates of heaven and enter it."

On the rays of Chastity: "All virtues come with it. The clean of heart will see God's mysteries and God Himself."

On the rays of Reward: "If the lavish rewards are delightful, do not be deterred by the many hardships. He who suffers with Me will rejoice with Me. For My friends, suffering is momentary, but heavenly happiness is everlasting."

On the rays of Fasting: “The most powerful weapon against the devil’s snares. The safeguard of all virtues. By it devils of every sort are cast out.”

An authoritative warning

A wide, rose-coloured ribbon formed the edge of the lower hem of the cloak and on it was written: “Topic for Sermons, Morning, Noon and Night:

Glean even bits of virtues and you will build a great edifice of sanctity for yourselves.

Woe to you who despise small things; you shall fall little by little.”

Up to this point the directors were either standing or kneeling, totally bewildered and silent.

But then Father Rua, as though beside himself, exclaimed, “Let’s make a note of this, lest we forget it.”

He sought a pen but found none. Pulling out his wallet, he rummaged through it in vain.

“I will remember,” Father Durando said. “I intend to write it down,” Father Fagnano retorted and began writing with the stem of a rose. All were surprised and they found they could read the writing.

When Father Fagnano was through, Father Costamagna dictated these words: “Charity understands all things, bears all things, overcomes all things. Let us preach this in word and deed.”

The reverse of a true Salesian

As Father Fagnano was writing, the lights went out and we were left in total darkness. “Silence,” Father Ghivarello said. “Let us kneel down and pray; the light will return.” Father Lasagna intoned the *Veni Creator*, and then the *De Profundis* [ending with the invocation] *Maria, Auxilium Christianorum*. As we all responded *Ora pro nobis*, a light shone, focusing on a poster which read: *Pia Salesianorum Societas quale esse periclitatur anno salutis 1900* (The Pious Salesian Society as it runs the risk of being in the year of salvation. A moment later the light grew stronger, and we were able to see and recognize each other. At the heart of this glowing light, *the same august person appeared again, but he looked very sad and on the verge of tears*. His cape was faded, moth-eaten and threadbare.

Where each diamond had previously been set, there was now a gaping hole made by moths and other insects.

“Look and understand,” the personage said. Then I saw that the ten diamonds had turned into as many moths ravenously eating through the cape. In the place of *Faith* I now saw “*Sleep and sloth.*” In the place of *Hope*, “*Buffoonery and scurrility.*” In the place of *Charity*, “*Negligence in the performance of spiritual duties. They love and seek what gratifies them, not what pertains to Christ.*” In the place of *Temperance*, *Gluttony.* “*Their God is their belly.*” In the place of *Work*, “*Sleep, theft and idleness.*” In the place of *Obedience* there was only a gaping hole and no inscription. In the place of *Chastity*, “*Concupiscence of the eyes and pride of life.*” *Poverty* had been replaced by “*Comfort, clothes, drink and money.*” In the place of *Reward*, “*The things of earth are what we seek.*” Where *Fasting* had been, there was only a hole, no writing. We were now all filled with fear. Father Lasagna fell into a faint. Father Cagliero turned as white as a sheet and, grasping a chair for support, cried out, “Can it be that things have already come to such a state?” Father Lazzero and Father Guidazio, frightened out of their wits, reached out to hold each other up. Father Francesca, Count Cays, Father Barberis and Father Leveratto fell to their knees, rosary in hand. At that moment an ominous voice declared, “How the beauty has faded!”

The message of a youngster

Then, as we stood in semi-darkness, something strange occurred.

Pitch darkness again swallowed us up and in its midst a most dazzling light arose in the form of a human body. We could not fix our eyes on it, but we could make it out to be a handsome young man, clad in a white garment interwoven with gold and silver threads and entirely bordered by a string of brilliant diamonds.

He moved toward us majestic in mien, yet gentle and friendly, and addressed us as follows:

“Servants and instruments of Almighty God, listen and understand. Take heart and be strong.

What you have seen and heard is a heavenly warning sent to you and to your confreres. Take it to heart and endeavour to understand it.

An attack foreseen does less harm and can be warded off.

Let each of the inscriptions be a topic of your talks. Preach unceasingly in season and out of season. However, make sure that you always practice

what you preach, so that your deeds may be a light, which may be passed on to your confreres from generation to generation as a solid tradition.

Take heed and understand.

Be cautious in accepting novices, strong in training them, prudent in admitting them [to vows]. Test all of them but keep only the good; dismiss the lightminded and fickle. Take heed and understand. From morning to night ceaselessly meditate on the observance of the constitutions. If you do this, the hand of the Almighty will never fail you.

You will be a model to the world and to angels, and your glory will be the glory of God. Those who will live to see the end of this century and the dawn of the next shall say of you: 'By the Lord was this accomplished, and it is wonderful in our eyes.' Then all your confreres and all your sons shall sing: *'Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to Your name be the glory.'* These last words were chanted, and the youth's voice was joined by a multitude of other voices, so melodiously blended and resonant that we were soon beside ourselves and, to keep from swooning away, chimed in the singing.

As the song ended and the light dimmed, I awoke and realized that it was dawn.

Don Bosco's note

The dream lasted almost the entire night, so that, come morning, I was totally exhausted.

Still, fearing that I might forget, I quickly arose and jotted down some notes, to serve me as a reminder in recalling all I have here written on this feast of Our Lady's Presentation in the Temple.

I could not possibly remember everything.

But among other things, I was able to ascertain with certainty that the Lord is very merciful to me. Our Society is blessed by God, but He asks us also to do our share.

The evils threatened will be warded off if we preach about the vices and virtues pointed out to us. If we practice what we preach, we shall be able to hand on to our confreres a practical tradition of what we have done and shall do. I also managed to ascertain that many thorns and difficulties lie immediately ahead of us, but they will be followed by great consolations.

Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us.

Comments on the dream

The dream

Reading the dream of the ten diamonds presents us what the spiritual profile of our faith experience must be and what our Christian life can become if we walk carefully or spiritual journey or not.

The dream unfolds in fundamentally three scenes:

- in the *first scene* we discover the joyful identity of the Salesian and the necessary ingredients to realize it: they are the ten diamonds lived with commitment and consistently;
- in the *second scene* we are presented with the results of those who do not walk or are educated in the faith, living superficially and distant from God. The consequence: poverty and disappointment. The diamonds are no longer there, so they cannot shine;
- in the *third scene* the presence of the “young messenger” is an invitation to walk seriously and courageously; without fear, being strong and persevering in the good.

We belong to God

In the first instance, there are so many suggestions that this message reveals to us and these images reinforce the central idea that Don Bosco wants to give each of us: **We belong to God, we are his, precious in his eyes!**

Life becomes a joy when we discover that we belong to God and that he has always thought of us and rested his gaze on us. By being more and more convinced of this certainty, we will achieve happiness. Didn't Don Bosco say so often: “Do you want to be happy in time and in eternity?” Well, complete happiness is attained by living like Christ, being genuinely **Christian.**

So many times, I see young people crestfallen and sad, struggling to find reasons to be serene and happy. So, I keep asking myself insistently: why is it not possible to be happy? After his conversion, Paul Claudel kept repeating: “Tell everyone their only duty is to be happy.” It is a sign that we love the Lord and we're being good to others and to ourselves.

Christ has given us joy, the Gospel is that news, wonderful and ever new. What happened to our Baptism? How aware am I of this extraordinary sense of belonging?

I once heard a preacher say: *"If only we realized how much God loves us, we would surely die of joy!"* Isn't this extraordinary? Yet, what an effort we have to make to recognize God's love and to experience the fact that living this love brings us joy!

Don Bosco said: *"My son, think of the fact that God made you his son in Holy Baptism, he loved and continues to love you like a tender father."* Through Baptism we have become God's property, we've been inserted into his own life. I like to think of Baptism as receiving **the seal of "eternal life."** Wonderful! Within us we have the assurance of eternal life: God bends over us saying: *"You are my beloved child, you are mine forever, I love you infinitely!"*

This discovery brings true joy, **the joy of belonging to God.** Without God, man cannot exist! Therefore, joy is a fact that concerns being and living, it touches life. The gift of God's love is greater than our weaknesses. We belong to him and his "breath" is Life for us. The psalmist reminds us:

*"When you turn away, we are afraid,
when you take away your breath, they die
and go back to the dust from which they came.
But when you give them breath, they are created,
and you give new life to the earth."*

(Psalm 104,29-30)

Don Bosco repeats that to know God's love brings great joy to our lives. The dream, in fact, offers us a scene of great serenity and joy, supported by the presence of the personage with the sparkling cloak bearing ten diamonds.

One seems to hear the words of Pope Benedict XVI at the beginning of his pontificate when he told young people: *"Whoever lets Christ enter, loses nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only through this friendship are the doors of life flung wide open."* Even the ninth successor of Don Bosco, Fr. Pascual Chavez repeatedly recalled this reality: *"What is the use of a ministry that does not lead us to encounter the One, the One and only, who does not disappoint the aspirations of young people to be happy, to live and to love forever?"*

Christ gives everything

“...We seemed to have found ourselves in a splendidly decorated room...when a man of such majestic appearance appeared. We could hardly bear to gaze on him.”

The vision of an enchanting atmosphere and of the majestic personage, represent the possibility of **a life lived under the banner of “beauty.”** “There is nothing more beautiful than being touched and surprised by the Gospel, by Christ,” said Benedict XVI. Truly, Jesus Christ gives “everything” life.

The moment you realize that Christ can fill your life, your existence is no longer the same, it becomes amazing, joyful, beautiful and loving. This conviction must also grow in us and it will, if we have the experience of Christ, which means encountering him, having the courage to recognize him, seeking him, loving him and serving him. In his first encyclical *Lumen Fidei*, Pope Francis wrote: “Those who believe are transformed by the love to which they have opened their hearts in faith. By their openness to this offer of primordial love, their lives are enlarged and expanded.” (LF 21). It is very encouraging to know that Christ lives in me and that faith in Him causes a sort of “enlarged” love in my existence. This is the joy of a Christian!

The ninth successor of Don Bosco writes:

“Contemplating Christ is neither an aesthetic amusement, nor a liberal pastime, nor an intellectual curiosity; it is, on the contrary, an insatiable passion that is never satisfied and an urgent need to know, love and follow.”

A young person who encounters and recognizes Christ becomes capable of living like Christ: “We love because we have been loved and we know and believe in the love God has for us” (1Jn 4:16).

A “beautiful” life

By living this encounter with Christ, one shares his beauty. The disciples on Mount Tabor live with Jesus the “beautiful” experience of the Transfiguration: “Master, it is good for us to be here” (Lk 9:33).

The Christian life is a path of beauty. The Christian life, when it shines, is beautiful and fascinating because Christ is ‘the’ Beautiful One.

We must rediscover what thrilled St Augustine: *“Too late have I loved you, O Beauty, ancient yet ever new. Too late have I loved you! And behold, you were within, but I was outside, searching for you there – plunging, deformed amid those*

fair forms which you had made. You were with me, but I was not with you. Things held me far from you, which, unless they were in you did not exist at all. You called and shouted, and burst my deafness. You gleamed and shone upon me, and chased away my blindness. You breathed fragrant odours on me, and I held back my breath, but now I pant for you. I tasted, and now I hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and now I yearn for your peace.” (Confessions X, 27).

Who among us has not experienced beauty, in a face, in an encounter, in a landscape, in a work of art, in music...? It is one of the strongest and most fascinating experiences of being men and women. But it is above all, in recognizing Jesus Christ that we experience beauty. The beauty of the beautiful Shepherd (that is the most precise translation of Jesus’ affirmation: “I am the Good Shepherd”) consists in the love with which he hands himself over to death for the salvation of his sheep. This means that “his beauty is experienced by letting oneself loved by him” (Card. Carlo Maria Martini).

Beauty always brings us back to God.

John Paul II write to artists saying: “No one better than you artists, brilliant builders of beauty, can sense something of the pathos with which God, at the dawn of creation, looked at the work of his hands.” God looked at Creation with “emotion” because “he saw what he had made, and behold it was very good.” (Gn. 1:31) So, beauty is an invitation and a call to the Transcendent, to taste life and to live it splendidly. A young person who knows how to cherish beauty can only draw closer and closer to God, the source of all things beautiful and to the foundation of a priceless existence

The proposed path on this journey of the ten diamonds follows this order: faith, hope, charity, work, temperance, obedience, poverty, chastity, reward and fasting. **The “gems,” i.e. the diamonds are a new impetus to the Christian life, motivated by a renewed encounter with the beauty of God.**

Walking promptly and decisively

Yes, it takes decision and courage to believe that Christ gives you everything. Don Bosco often repeated to his boys: *“Have the courage of your faith and your convictions. It is up to the bad to tremble in front of the good, not the good to tremble before the bad.”*

With this dream of the ten diamonds, Don Bosco wants to give young people the beauty of a Christian life lived in fidelity and joy. It seems that the saint of young people has a clear conviction that **the Gospel, which is Christ, comes first of all and above everything else.**

It is marvellous to meet young people who believe and who are not afraid to show it. Living the essential virtues of an authentic Christian life (the ten diamonds) we *“do not practice a virtue – writes Fr Chavez, (faith, hope, charity, work, temperance, obedience, poverty, chastity, fasting and reward) or an activity (education, mission etc.) we follow a Person whom we want to imitate entirely and a Gospel that we want to live in its entirety.”*

Walking promptly and decisively means having the will to go against the tide. Benedict XVI told young people: ***“Go against the tide. Be vigilant! Be critical! Don’t be afraid, dear friends, to prefer “alternative” ways prompted by true love: a sober and supportive lifestyle; sincere and pure emotional relationships; an honest commitment to study and work; a deep interest in the common good. Don’t be afraid to appear different and to be criticized for what may make you seem like a loser or outdated. Your peers, but also adults and especially those who seem furthest from the Gospel mindset and values have a deep need to see someone who dares to live according to the fullness of humanity manifested by Jesus Christ.”***

How to walk? The ten diamonds

The character of the ten diamonds is the precious outline of a growth journey: the list of virtues represented by the diamonds describes the characteristic traits of the believer, exuberant and enthusiastic for the mystery of Christ. Life as a believer has its own visibility. It is not enough to be believers, you need to be credible: these are the five diamonds on the front; and visibility, in turn, is supported by a robust interiority: these are the diamonds on the back of the cloak. Both are necessary and mutually supportive. To walk as a believer, it is necessary to have a style and a ‘high’ tenor of life. We said previously that this style, this quality of life is acquired by the joy of knowing that we are loved.

As a consequence:

To experience joy, you need:

- **to react against the tendency to make the minimum effort.** How must one walk? With courage and will! A real “rule of life” must be drawn up;
- **to react against selfishness** that makes us want to turn in on ourselves. How must one walk? With generosity and openness to others;
- **“to centre” one’s life on the Crucified and Risen Christ**, capable of adoring the One who loves us with an infinite love. How must one walk? By drawing light and strength from Christ in daily prayer;
- **“to choose”** that is, to be able to make clear choices and orientations for one’s life. How must one walk? By fixing our gaze on the One who daily “chooses” and loves us.

Here then is a suggestion on how to possess the joy of growing to love, to adore and to choose. They are the ten diamonds!

The First diamond: Faith

It is a free gift from God and accessible to those who humbly ask for it. Having faith means adhering to God, entrusting oneself to him and being able to say ‘yes’ with certainty, ‘yes, God is love!’

The Russian writer Tolstoy stated that “man can ignore that he has a God, just as he can ignore that he has a heart; but without God, as without a heart, man cannot live.” Our heart thirsts for the infinite: only in God is this thirst satisfied.

God is necessary! We cannot do without Him. The spiritual life is essentially this relationship between God and man. Man must recognize the presence and action of God in his life.

Don Bosco put it this way: *“If we open our eyes, we cannot fail to recognize the existence, power and wisdom of God: everything was created by him. It is God who said: let there be light and light was made. He says to all things: it was I who made you. And in this word, which every man can trust and must understand, his power and divinity are expressed.”*

The goodness and mercy of God the Creator filled Don Bosco’s life with amazement, wonder and tenderness. Experiencing this God is a fundamental requirement of every Christian. Don Bosco recalled once again: “the two disciples of John the Baptist followed Jesus to find out where he lived. Jesus said to them, “Come and see.” They went and saw where he lived and stayed with him that day. Let us therefore take the time to stay with Jesus. Let us look at him, listen to him, silently.” We therefore learn that

“faith” is a gift that must be cultivated, otherwise it risks taking wrong and dangerous turns (superstition, trivialization of life, fanatical adherence to ideologies, fashions and people).

We cultivate a sense of wonder when we recognize and encounter God in everything, every person and every event.

A young person who has faith is solid, stable and firm. He has laid a firm foundation for his life. He is like a child held tightly in his mother’s arms, sure that she will be protected. This is why Don Bosco said that “faith is what does everything.”

The Second diamond: Hope

It is the virtue by which we desire and expect eternal life from God as our happiness. It is the certainty of eternal life with God. Dionysius the Areopagite writes: “We must glorify eternal life from which every other life is derived. From it every creature receives life according to its abilities and somehow participates in life. Divine life, which is higher than any other life, vivifies and protects life,” a life generated by Life, by God himself. Being a young man or woman who possesses hope, means that s/he demonstrates the joy of a Christian life guided, accompanied and supported from on high. So, for a Christian, hope is a very central theme!

It is central because with a future perspective of life “in” and “with” God, there is neither life nor hope for the Christian and for man in general. St Peter affirms: “God the Father...because of his great mercy...he gave us new life by raising Jesus Christ from the dead. This fills us with a living hope.” “He gave us new life” signifies renewal, improved, transformed, remade and rebuilt... In Christ we are new creatures. In Christ we are children of God who is Father, therefore in love with all his children. And, it takes the form of “mercy,” goodness, compassion, providence, tenderness and consolation.

The whole of history salvation and even our own existence is wrapped up and enveloped in the mercy of the Father.

This is Christian hope: the certainty of belonging now and always to God. Convinced that we are his, we are and will always be in good hands!

A young man who cultivates this hope is not afraid of anything and will always be serene. Don Bosco says: *“Remember that in heaven, that will be your reward.”*

The Third diamond: Charity

It is the virtue by which we love God above all and our neighbour as ourselves out of love for God. Using the words of Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, *“Christ’s programme is a heart that sees.”* Precisely for this reason, it is necessary to educate oneself to live this charity. In the dream Don Bosco recalls that *“Charity understands all things, endures all things, overcomes all things. Let’s preach this in words and deeds.”* A young man who lives charitably is capable not only of availability and gratuitousness, not only of being able to give something, but to give all of himself. Immersed in a society where the “weak” culture of death prevails, lived charity becomes a witness and spreads a culture of life. **The love received translates into the care of others and for others.** We need to recover the evangelical logic which is made of pure gratuitousness. Don Bosco said: *“The Lord has brought us into this world for others. Works of charity are not done for a stipend.”* And again: *“Do good, do a lot of good and you will never regret having done it.”*

The Fourth diamond: Work

For man, work is a right and a duty through which he collaborates with God the creator.

John Paul II said that work is arduous, useful and worthy of our condition as persons. By working, we not only transform nature, adapting it to our needs, but we grow into more human people. Work is good:

- *difficult* because it involves applying one’s physical or mental energies. Working requires effort and therefore has considerable formative and ascetic value;
- *useful* because it perfects us, enriching us with new talents and gifts; therefore, it helps us to grow and mature;
- *respectable* because it is related to our personal dignity. It is not a commodity it adds to our integral development as persons.

Isn’t it wonderful to know that our work is a collaboration in the work of the Creator? By working we reproduce *in ourselves the image of God the Creator.*

A young person who immerses himself in his duties of work or study is capable of walking in faith towards holiness, because work unites us to the person and the work of the Creator of the Universe and to the Saviour of people, to Jesus Christ, who worked for thirty years in Nazareth.

Don Bosco often repeated: *“By working we mean fulfilling one’s duties. Those who do not get used to work will almost always be lazy right up to their old age.”*

The Fifth diamond: Temperance

It is the virtue that moderates the attraction to pleasures, ensures the mastery of the will over the instincts and makes one capable of balance in the use of created goods.

We can say that temperance is the virtue that helps us to be “sober,” that is, “measured, regulated and controlled in everything. Rightly, the “magic word” for living temperately is “balance.” We need balance in life! He who does not abuse food, drink, alcohol or pleasure, does not deprive himself of his conscience through the use of drugs, etc. and is temperate. A temperate person is master of himself: his passions do not prevail over his reason, will or even his “heart.”

Temperance is indispensable for man to “be” fully a man. When, on the contrary, he gets carried away by his passions he becomes a “victim” of them, he himself renouncing the use of his reason.

A young person who wants to achieve this balance must impose a serious task on himself and a particular “vigilance” on all aspects of his behaviour.

“One who has a healthy sleep with a well-regulated stomach gets up in the morning with his spirit free.” (Sirach 31:24)

Don Bosco kept repeating that *“temperance is blessed by the Lord and is beneficial to the intelligence and for bodily health.”* And to his Salesians he said: *“Give me a young man who is temperate in eating, drinking and sleeping and you will see him virtuous and assiduous in his duties and a lover of all virtues”*

The Sixth diamond: Obedience

Let us now pass over to describe what is on the back of the cloak of the personage who appeared to Don Bosco. These 5 diamonds represent the

interior deportment that every young person should develop in order to live fully his/her faith in order to be really happy.

The philosopher Blaise Pascal wrote: "It is so difficult to believe, because it is so difficult to obey."

But what is obedience and why do you need to obey? Obeying means believing and responding to God's love; it means surrendering oneself and entrusting oneself to him; to embrace his truth. The believing person is an obedient person; the one who trusts God is the one who surrenders himself. Ob-bedire (from the Latin "ob-audire") means knowing how to listen, and above all, placing the Lord Jesus at the centre of our every decision. Do you remember the apostle Peter who, frustrated by the fruitless catch (Lk 5:1-11) has the courage to obey Jesus who asks him to cast his nets as he says: "At your word Lord, I will cast the nets." It is like saying, "Lord, I trust in your word. It is your word that gives me life! In you, Lord, I cast the net of my existence!" We must listen to God, learning from the many obedient people that the Bible presents to us.

Obedience is the thermometer of trust we repose in God. Like Jesus, an obedient person must be able to say with his life: "Father, if you want, you can take this cup away from me! However, not my will, but yours be done." (Lk 22:42) **Do God's will!** Here's a beautiful comment made by some monks who live in the city: "By virtue of obedience, you will learn to love, to renounce yourself to do what pleases your brothers and God; to love your neighbour as yourself and God above all, to get along with others in order to act together in communion of listening according to God's plan. The Father thus awaits your free cooperation in his plan of love. Your brothers await your free participation in communion, in this love. The more you love, the more you will love. The more you love, the more your life will obey. Love and obedience are equal. So, if you want to love, be obedient" (Monks in the city: A rule of life)

Don Bosco's ninth successor, Father Chavez also has very beautiful words that help us to understand the reality of obedience and availability: *"No school is better than that of Mary, to allow oneself to be introduced to contemplation and acceptance, to ponder in one's heart the Word of God. Mary places herself as a model of one who welcomes grace. In fact, like her, no believer has ever managed to host so well the creature in her womb: Mary teaches us that whoever believes in the Word makes it his own flesh, that whoever serves it with his life makes it his own life, that whoever obeys God becomes himself a son."*

A young person who “listens” and lives the word of God (like the Virgin Mary: “May your Word be fulfilled in me”), achieves that “high quality” of Christian life, sanctity. Don Bosco often encouraged his young people with these words: *“An obedient young person will become a saint. A disobedient one goes along a path that leads to his perdition.”*

The Seventh diamond: Poverty

The soul of poverty is an interior attitude similar to humility, trust, simplicity and spiritual childhood. We are all invited to identify with the poor Christ. We are all called to embody the inner attitude of poverty in solidarity, service and social commitment. I like to think of poverty as the ability to empty oneself of oneself to be filled with the One who is our wealth. Just as Mary did, who, in the canticle of the Magnificat proclaimed herself little and poor, and for that reason God filled her with greatness. *Being poor today means having learned to:*

- to live with sobriety (and this is already a great thing!);
- to live relying only on God;
- to accept that we are creatures in need of his love and care;
- to give precedence to the right values and recognize the superiority of God and the goods of his Kingdom

The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the poor because they are like children who know how to stay in the arms of their parents and say: *“Abba! Dad!”* Therefore, the first step in learning to live as “poor” lies in an attitude of openness to God, of availability and of trust. In this perspective, the virtue of poverty is not only about the right use of earthly goods, but the truth of our relationship with God. Poverty is the daughter of obedience and the mother of hope!

A young person who lives this attitude of poverty is a youngster who is open to God, to others and to his/her neighbour. Don Bosco confirms: *“How can we be disciples of Jesus if we show ourselves so different from our teacher? Jesus was born poor, lived poor and died very poor.”*

The Eighth diamond: Chastity

Sexuality is an all pervasive and dynamic power in our entire being. It influences all our faculties and activities; it is a fundamental component of our life as human persons and it shapes the way we behave and work...

Thinking, willing, feeling, even believing, loving and hoping are expressed according to a form of sexual individualization. Sexuality refers to the masculine or feminine configuration of our persona and to the orientation of man towards woman and of her towards him.

Having understood this reality clearly, marvellous horizons of dialogue, of relationality, of true love open up. *What, then, is chastity?* It is a power that allows you to love as a sexed person. Chastity orders and makes real the forces of sexuality and love, placing them at the service of relationships, solidarity and communion.

Being Christian, requires mastery and constant channelling of instinctive and sexual impulses. It demands the integration of the genital and erotic aspects of interpersonal love and the crowning of all this dynamism in charity.

Therefore, chastity refers to the integration and relationship of the person as a sexual being.

Living chastity means loving in an “orderly” manner. And to do this, it is necessary **to educate the heart** because loving is not something:

- *automatic*, which comes of itself with the simple flow of time;
- *easy* or spontaneous: one has to deal with the enemies of love such as selfishness, seeking one’s own interests, exploitation of others or the pleasure of treating people as simple objects. The consequences of “wrong” untrue love (which is impurity) are well known: lust, addicted to vice, short-sightedness, insensitivity and scepticism in the face of the spiritual; that is, quite the opposite of the consequences of chastity which are: transparency and fervour in the face of all that is divine. Impurity binds and enslaves. It is totally insensitive to the good and fruitful when confronting vice.

To love is to generate, to “give life,” not just “to transmit life.” It is gratuitous, which means it becomes the “totality of the gift,” at least curiously, if not disturbing, to observe how our world, so attentive to promoting intellectual growth of new generations, so open to the investment of energies on a cultural level, does not worry enough about training young people immersed in an instinctive and uncontrolled affectivity and often a source of suffering, if not a real relational pathology. The world of emotions therefore requires **to be formed, so to speak, it has to be “refined,”** by being educated and this formation of intelligence, is a long and demanding task.

- **It means being educated to what is a free gift, to the capacity to sacrifice and to be grateful:** attitudes that today are so rare as they are necessary for our social coexistence.
- **It means, being educated to aim high** and not skipping steps by wasting one's life experiences that are fundamental for growth: in this sense, education in the orderly and total management of one's sexuality and one's desires. Thus, freed from the prison of selfishness in order to recognize the relational and generative nature, is a guarantee of the formation of genuine people, capable of combining sentiment, will and reason, to give meaning to their choices.
- **It means to educate your heart; a key step on the path to discovering your vocation,** which is a response to a call from a Father, who has a personal plan in mind for each of us.

A young person who is able to live his capacity to love in this way; who is not afraid to be chaste, will soon reach the heights of sanctity! Don Bosco reminds us that *"the greatest and most powerful guardian of purity is the thought of the presence of God."*

The Ninth diamond: The Reward

Eternal life is this: **Paradise**, that is, being **"with"** Christ in the joy of the Father and this surpasses everything that is joyful, great and beautiful that we can think of or imagine.

The "ultimate" truths (death, judgment, hell and heaven) are truths that challenge us: they represent our definitive destiny. They tell us that **human life doesn't end with death** and that thought frees us from the anguish of death as the end of everything. We want to live!

The Christian lives *"in the expectation that the blessed hope is fulfilled and that our Saviour Jesus Christ is coming."* A waiting that is "watchful" means not allowing ourselves be overcome by sleep so that we can welcome the Lord who is coming.

This is the meaning of the diamond called the "Reward." We Christians know that Eternal Life, the Reward, is the great promise of the Gospel. It is not a vague survival or even the simple immortality of the soul, but the endless life of the person with all his/her dimensions, corporeal and spiritual, with all his/her relationships with others, with the world and with God. It is life in the Glory of God. The Gospel does not just verbally

promise eternal life, but through the announcement of a real fact: the resurrection of Jesus. The Gospel is good news, precisely because in it, the story doesn't end with the burial of Jesus and the empty tomb, but with the newness of the resurrection and eternal life in God.

A young person who lives with this perspective makes his daily life a place of joyful encounter with God and his/her brothers and sisters.

At a recent convention of Verona, the Italian Church reaffirmed that the centre of Christian witness is the Risen Crucifix! This then is the living hope that the Church wants to offer people today.

To see, to encounter and to communicate the Risen One:

- Is the duty of Christian witness;
- It is the way to keep hope alive;
- It is the task of a young person who has a clear perspective of a full life with God.

With all his might Don Bosco transmitted this certainty to his youngsters: *"I love Paradise more than all the riches of the world;" "In tough times and in suffering, never forget that we have a great reward prepared in Paradise;" "A piece of Heaven sets everything right;" "Heaven is not made for the easy-goers."*

Even the words at the end of his life are particularly significant and moving: *"Tell the boys, that I am waiting for all of them in Paradise."*

The Tenth diamond: Fasting

In the dream, Don Bosco saw rays starting out from each diamond with some significant phrases emblazoned there. Against the diamond entitled fasting was written: *"It is the most powerful weapon against the snares of the devil. It is the sentinel of all virtues. With fasting all sorts of enemies are driven out."*

Fasting, abstinence, penance and mortification are not forms of contempt for the body but *powerful tools to reinvigorate the spirit*, making it capable of raising up the very corporeality of the person in a sincere gift of oneself. The fasting of Christians finds its model and novel and original meaning in Jesus who strongly affirms its essentially interior and religious significance: fasting, prayer and almsgiving are an act of offering and love to the Father "who, in secret sees what is done in secret" Mt 6, 18). They are an essential aspect in the disciple's following of Christ, keeping in mind that even fasting practices can become pitfalls: self-satisfaction, illusions...

There is therefore an intimate *bond between fasting and the conversion of life*, repentance of sins, humble and trusting prayer, the exercise of fraternal charity and the struggle against injustice. Today, fasting is practiced for a variety of “secular” reasons (protests, contests, diets...). Therefore, it is necessary to rediscover and reaffirm the original Christian meaning of fasting which finds its full impetus only if it is carried out by living in communion with Christ.

It consists in depriving oneself or in some cases, not only in moderation in food but also of anything that can be an obstacle to a spiritual life open to one’s relationship with God through meditation and prayer, through rich and fruitful practice of the Christian virtues and by being available in the service of those less fortunate than ourselves.

The Christian meaning of fasting and abstinence urges believers not only to cultivate a greater sobriety of life, but also to implement a more lucid and courageous discernment regarding the choices being made in some sectors of life today: this is a requirement if **one is to be faithful to one’s baptismal commitment**.

The young person who practices “fasting” will be able to make an original and decisive contribution through a sober and austere lifestyle making a constructive and welcome contribution to society. Don Bosco states: *“Not everyone can fast, but everyone can love God. I won’t tell you to fast, but I recommend that you be temperate.*

In summary: Joyfully genuine Christians

This plan is fascinating and brings with it the invitation of the Holy Spirit: We are called to sanctity, that is, to the fullness of the life of God within us. Through our mediocrity and the greyness of our petty decisions we are invited to open our hearts with a generous and joyful ‘yes’ to this journey as Don Bosco has presented it to us.

For young people, the dream of the ten diamonds can be considered a **pressing invitation to become joyfully active Christians, courageously genuine, and true**.

Young Christians **capable of choosing life**, are **capable of responding** to the call to holiness living to the full their baptismal life, realized in truth and joy. There are too many young people today in an “identity crisis,” who no longer know who they are and so let themselves be carried away by the tide, thinking of just surviving. There are also many young people

who have “relinquished” their responsibility, allowing themselves to be overcome by negative and destructive pessimism, leading them to waste their lives, confusing living with merely existing.

Seeking to solve this predicament means setting oneself courageously to search for one’s “vocation.” This was what Don Bosco wrote to young people: *“My dear friend, I love you with all my heart. It is enough for me to know you are young for me to love you. In your heart you carry the treasure of the Lord’s friendship. If you maintain it, you are very rich. If you lose it, you become one of the unhappiest and poorest people in the world. The Lord is always with you and helps you to practice the suggestions that I will give you. If you live like this, I assure you, that God will be pleased with you, and you will save your soul: the most important task of your life.”*

God has given you a long and happy life. May your friendship with the Lord always be your great wealth in this earthly life and in eternity.”

Thinking and reflecting on your life means thinking about your “**vocation,**” that is, **the plan of happiness that God has for you.** Your vocation is to fully live up to this plan.

And thinking about one’s own happiness (= vocation) means establishing a vibrant and personal relationship with God. **It is not enough that God exists, it is necessary to maintain a constant dialogue with him.** A profound and constant dialogue that allows you to respond daily to his call. For this reason, a young person is always “in vocation” and continuously lives with his ear attentive to every word, with an eye that is attentive to every fact and with a heart that is open to every encounter.

The advice of a friend: Don’t be afraid

On this journey, you don’t have to worry, you don’t have to be afraid! You just need a little courage and good will to recognize that God is constantly calling you and staying close to you. **That God is the one who chooses you every day, every moment should fill you with his Love.** Your ability to decide and to choose is your response to the One who loved you first. Be courageous and recognize, among the many voices of this world, the voice of the One who alone knows how to pronounce your name with love and faithfulness. **This is great wealth,** a precious gift that is to be cherished, remembered and it is delivered to you through the dream of the ten diamonds!

Don't be afraid to ask for help to listen to this voice. A good spiritual guide is a precious treasure that is worth as much as a diamond!

Don Bosco's ninth successor Fr Chavez wrote: *"To live today as believers, one must be able to live with silence; to fill your life with words and noise is to walk down the road of unbelief."*

Therefore, enter courageously into the silence that allows you to choose and decide to live your Christianity. Do not forget this advice of Don Bosco: *"It is with Jesus in your heart, that decisions must be made."*

**EXERCISES
AND
REFLECTION
ON THE
TEN
DIAMONDS**

In this second part, I present short assignments on each diamond in order to help you better internalize its values into your life and to consolidate the attitudes that the dream proposes.

They are simple and concise outlines for an itinerary, a journey that facilitates the commitment to work on yourself without letting you believe that you have arrived. The spiritual life is a constant journey to get "better and better which will eventually lead you to true joy."

Each assignment is structured thus:

- The diamond
- Don Bosco's thought as presented in the dream
- Situations of risk or temptation... when the cloak gets tainted...moth-eaten or torn
- Some suggestions for a faith journey
- Action: a possible commitment to concretely and promptly proceed
- Material for prayer and personal reflection

Nb. It will be useful to precede reading the assignment by first reading what is written regarding the diamond in question.

The Diamond of faith *Openness to the mystery of God*

Meditation

We consider **faith as the presence of the Holy Spirit within us**, who assures us and intensifies our awareness of our Christian identity.

As we begin, we look at reality as the Spirit of the Lord inspiring us. Through this seeing, we have a clear awareness of being disciples of Jesus: this is the central object of our contemplation.

What are the elements of faith?

- **The first is that of listening;** listening to those who believe not simply those who are curious; a filial openness and a docile attitude, detached from oneself. Such listening spontaneously leads to obedience to the Father! Faith spontaneously leads the believer to a daily attitude of docility to God's will.
- **The second element** of our faith is **the contemplative dimension** of the believer. Contemplation leads us into God and gives us the awareness of being known by God.
- **A third element** of our faith is **the awareness our sonship**. One feels that one is truly becoming a new creature, a true child of God, participating in the mystery of the intimate life of the Trinity!
- **A fourth element** of our faith is **a quiet sense of courage** in the presence of anyone. This courage is like a shield of faith; assuring us that in Christ we have access to the Father, despite difficulties.

Don Bosco almost spontaneously perceived the historical depth of the Christian faith. He had a mindset that helped him to scrutinize and perceive God's ineffable presence and action among people.

One day Fr Dalmazzo went to Don Bosco: "...Tell me now, Don Bosco, when you see how many extraordinary things you have accomplished. What do you say?" Don Bosco reflected a moment, then looked heavenward and replied: "I believe that, had Our Lord found an even lower and weaker tool than I, he would have availed himself of it to perform his works" (EBM 18, 499-500).

Don Bosco wanted to objectively highlight the fact that he had **experienced the power of God in his life** and that, accepting it, anyone would have proceeded despite their personal incapacities.

One day in 1886, Don Bosco himself told Fr Marengo: “Had I a hundred times greater faith, I would have been able to do much greater things than I did” (EBM 18,500).

Don Bosco was convinced that faith involves a clear awareness that God is present in our lives and that he it is who does everything, obviously to further his Kingdom.

In the context of faith, two very important characteristics account for the vitality of Don Bosco’s Salesian spirit.

First of all, a lively sense of “gratitude” which he expressed most of all in the Eucharist; it causes **the person himself to become “eucharist.”**

Another fruit of this global vision of faith is “optimism.”

In the dream Don Bosco recalls that:

- Faith is, establishing an intimate and personal relationship with the Lord of Life: **Jesus Christ!**
- Faith is, **seeing** and recognizing the “supernatural” reality in which we are immersed.
- Faith is, **a shield** for the fight.
- Faith **gives life** and meaning to your industry.
- If faith is lacking its place is surrendered **to laziness** (acedia)”
- “Have faith because every good thing, both spiritual and material comes from the Lord.”

The risks and temptations...

How much “sleep” exists in Christians today! Too many young people sleep in front of a God who wants to enter their life, to make himself known. How much laziness! It’s not easy today to have a faith-vision of life. What does ‘having’ faith actually mean? It means being certain that God is present and acting and that everything is finally drawn back to him.

For a journey of faith

- Above all, **prayer:** “Lord increase my faith!”
- Learn to say **“thank you”** for what you are, for the fact that you are alive, for what you see and what you are aware of. Being grateful means getting out of the logic that says: “I’m entitled to everything.”
- Live **a life** that is an expression of the faith you profess. Your companions, and the people around you must be able to see the image of God in

you. With our life we remind people of the Creator, the one who makes all things good! Is this true of your life experience?

- Nourish your life of faith by participating in **the Eucharist** which is the most significant moment to thank God and ask for the gift of faith. Besides Sunday Mass, why not add another Mass in the course of the week?

Actions

that nourish my faith:

- with love for **the Word of God**, the source of faith;
- by *reading a good book or the Catechism of the Catholic Church or the Compendium* (get advice from a priest friend or a good spiritual guide)
- by reading and reflecting on the encyclical letter of Pope Francis *Lumen Fidei*

Prayer

Other biblical references

Mt 6, 25-34 *The provident and paternal presence of God*

Is 40, 11 *The paternal attitude of God*

Jn 15, 1-17 *Remain in my love*

Eph. 3, 14-19 *That Christ remain in their hearts*

The Diamond of hope

The certainty of help from on high

Meditation

Don Bosco was a **great model of hope**. His Salesian spirit is permeated all through with confidence and industry so characteristic of this **audacious dynamism of the Holy Spirit**. Remember the famous formula of the three Ss? (*Salve, Salvando, Salvati* = hello, by saving, be saved). Don Bosco **lived this hope daily in a most practical manner through his tireless work and sanctity**. By contemplating the mystery of God, his faith led him to prefer God's ineffable plan of salvation. He saw in Christ, the Saviour of man and the Lord of history; in his Mother Mary, the Help of Christians; in the Church, the great sacrament of salvation; in his own Christian growth and in need youth, the vast field of the "not-yet." That was what made his heart burst forth with the cry: "*Da mihi animas,*" Lord, grant that I may save youth and take away all the rest! **The following of Christ and his mission to youth merge in his spirit, in a single theological dynamism which constitutes the supportive structure of the whole.**

God does not impose on us his saving love, he proposes it, luring us with the fullness of his gifts and waiting for our response. He never ceases to hope in us, even when we have strayed far, like the prodigal son. Don Bosco exercised the theological virtue of hope to an extraordinary degree in the way he related with the boys, always believing that they would possibly improve. In the *treatise on the preventive system*, in his typical fashion he wrote: "**Charity (on which the system rests) hopes all things.**" He exercised this pastoral hope in two ways: he appealed to God's grace and Mary's help but Don Bosco also appealed to the personal resources of the youngster, convinced that "**in every youngster, even the most unfortunate, there is an accessible point of goodness:** the first duty of the educator is to find this point, this sensitive cord and to make the best of it."

But Don Bosco's pastoral hope was active, ingenious and creative. Without ever forcing a response from the youngster, he preferred to offer them the surest means to being open to the faith, and to human and Christian growth.

In the first place, he offered them the pure air of an ecclesial and evangelical environment. He knew well that faith cannot be lived individually but in an ecclesial community. Secondly, he offered them abundant and

succulent spiritual food: the Word of God, the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the two devotions fundamental to him: devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament (communion and visits) and to Mary Help of Christians, for a living and transforming encounter with the living Christ and with Mary's ever abiding presence.

In the dream Don Bosco recalled that:

- Hope in the Lord and not in men. "It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in men."
- Hope is the certainty of a presence, yesterday, today and forever.
- Hope is rooted in the resurrection of Christ.
- Hope is, therefore, the certainty of being made for Life: life in time and eternity!
- The disciples of all time plead: "Stay with us, Lord, it is evening." Christ promptly responds: "Yes I am with you, in you and for you."

The risks, the temptations...

How can we remain indifferent to this love which becomes Life for us, which becomes nourishment and support every day? How can it be possible that we trivialize or mock this Presence?

Yet, may youngsters today have not yet "bumped into" the God of Life! Many are indifferent and do not want to call the yearnings and desires of their hearts by their real names. In the morning when you get up, if you look up to Heaven, have the courage to say "thank you" because you woke up, or because you are alive, you are a young man or woman of Hope. You will be able to leave signs of joy, life and hope around you.

Be a youngster who is "sure," of the Love of God!

For a journey in hope

- First of all, joy. Learn to live in joy and optimism and in the serene awareness that God cares for you.
- Love Life! Cultivate a contemplative gaze at it! It must be the gaze of those who see life in depth, grasping its dimensions of gratuitousness, of beauty, provoking freedom and responsibility.
- "Take care of the life of everything and everyone."

Action

- Read often the passage from Matthew's Gospel (6, 25-34) "*Do not worry about your life*" (reproduced below), to strengthen your certainty that God is living and working and therefore God is the God of Hope.
- Read and reflect on the encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI *Spe Salvi*.

Prayer

From the Gospel of Matthew (6,25-34)

"This is why I tell you not to be worried about the food and drink you need in order to stay alive, or about clothes for your body. After all, isn't life worth more than food? And isn't the body worth more than clothes? Look at the birds: they do not sow seeds, gather a harvest and put it in barns; yet your Father in heaven takes care of them! Aren't you worth much more than birds? Can any of you live a bit longer by worrying about it? And why worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow: they do not work or make clothes for themselves. But I tell you that not even King Solomon with all his wealth had clothes as beautiful as one of these flowers. It is God who clothes the wild grass – grass that is here today and gone tomorrow, burnt up in the oven. Won't he be all the more sure to clothe you? How little faith you have!

So, do not start worrying: 'Where will my food come from? Or my drink? Or my clothes? (These are things that the pagans are always concerned about). Your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things. Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things. So do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings."

Magnificat

(It is one of the most beautiful canticles of Hope!)

My soul praises the Lord; my spirit is glad because of God my Saviour., for he has remembered me, his lowly servant! From now on all people will call me happy, because of the great things the Might God has done for me. His name is holy; from one generation to another, he shows mercy to those who honour him.

He has stretched out his mighty arm and scattered the proud with all their plans. He has brought down mighty kings from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. He has kept the promise he made to our ancestors, and has come to the help of his servant Israel. He has remembered to show mercy to Abraham and to all his descendants forever!

The Diamond of charity

Knowing how to carry each other's burdens

Meditation

Charity is sharing in the nature of God who is a communion of persons. St Paul, in the *First Letter to the Corinthians*, describes some characteristics of the mystery of charity as **the splendour of goodness**.

God is like that; and we are called to live the life of God in the Holy Spirit. We do what we can, but this is the seed we have in our hearts and which must grow until the day of the "parousia" when it will burst forth vigorously and clearly in each of us and God will be all in all; how beautiful!

Charity is the ultimate criterion for judging everything. How important this is! When some ideology wants to make its way, it replaces the ultimate criterion of charity with other criteria: one must always know how to compare them with the criterion of charity.

In God we find the source of our ability to love our neighbour. If you don't love God you don't do the rest. Your neighbour is inseparable, but he is not the cause of this love. It is in the place where God manifests himself in the needy, the thirsty, the hungry, the naked and he needs us. It is the privileged place for the manifestation of God and requires the expression of our love. However, love of neighbour has its own explanation and only in the immensity of God's love.

Having a divine origin, our love is not so much the manifestation of our good will, it is a participation in the same love of God that is communicated to us. It is the heroism of our generosity; it is a humble **participation in the immense mystery of God!**

Here is a great strategic point to keep in mind: **what is in us first and foremost is an option for Jesus Christ.** Starting from there, from our love for Christ no other love is lost; on the contrary it develops and grows and becomes constant and effective and active until we die.

So, it is charity that makes us signs and bearers of the love of Jesus Christ for people, especially for youngsters.

And we must be fascinating signs!

What was said in Geneva about Saint Francis de Sales should also be said about us: "We see in him the tender compassion of Jesus Christ!"

To conclude, let us remember a comment Mamma Margaret made about the first boys of Valdocco. When they disturbed her with their noise, Mamma Margaret said to Don Bosco: "Poor boys! They need a little straight talk once in a while. I just gave some to one fellow. He will change, you'll see! They're really good at heart, but they're so young and thoughtless! Let's be patient with them. Kindness always wins out!" (EBM 3, 261)

To understand the Salesian spirit well, we must reflect on its origins. We find charity and goodness proper to the Preventive System from the first moment of the Oratory when Mamma Margaret was with Don Bosco and when things were guided by the heart: and it was a heart permeated by the love of the Holy Spirit.

In the dream Don Bosco recalls that:

- **"Deus caritas est!"** God is love! From God every other form of love and availability originates.
- **Charity** is a constant attitude of sincere love for people. It is a love that turns into concrete concern for everyone.
- "Love and you will be loved." First of all, charity always benefits the person who gives **generously**.
- Charity is being **everything to everyone** without reserve. Don Bosco loved young people and gave himself to them without reserve. Charity becomes a locus of formation and joy.
- In a Salesian ambient, every young person is educated to **availability and sacrifice** (being young for the young). "Service" is what charity is called at Don Bosco's Oratory.
- **Service** is carried out at various levels (assistance, educational and manual work, taking care of someone, being guardian angels and various other services...).

Risks and temptations...

"Neglecting to give oneself to the works of God; seeking only their own tastes." This was how Don Bosco described the young man who is incapable of live a life of charity.

Today a lot is done for others, it is true. But what are the motives for this service? Is it personal gratification or Gospel generosity? How much is charity planned, on the contrary, how much is spontaneous? To what extent is a youngster capable of grasping "occasions" and charitable

opportunities that life presents us? These are some of the questions that need to be put to youngsters who find it hard to be “free” and generous. Charity always makes me seek the good of others.

“Living life as a gift” is not just a slogan but a formula to attain one’s own fulfilment.

“Charity has no pretences!” This affirmation of St. Paul should shake us out of our mediocrity and tepidity!

Journeying in charity

- Start concrete training in charity in the family (availability, service, attentiveness, kindness, kind words and generosity).
- Choose a page of the Gospel that supports your sense of giving and give reasons for your availability.
- Nourish your capacity for gracious availability by carefully participating in the Eucharist. It is only there that you will understand what it means to freely “lay down your life.”
- Nourish yourself through good examples in biographies of saints: read, meditate and imitate.

Activity

- Live concretely one of the traits suggested by St. Paul in 1 Cor 13 (which you find below).
- Read and meditate on the encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI *Deus Caritas Est*.

Prayer

From the First Letter to the Corinthians (13, 4-13)

“Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith and hope and patience never fail. Love is eternal. There are inspired messages but they are temporary; there are gifts of speaking in strange tongues, but they will cease; there is knowledge but it will pass. For our gifts of knowledge and of inspired messages are only partial; but when what is perfect comes, then what is partial will disappear. When I was a child, my speech, feelings and thinking were all those of a child; now that I have grown up, I have no more use for childish ways. What we see

now is like a dim image in a mirror, then we shall see face to face. What I know now is only partial; then it will be complete – as complete as God’s knowledge of me. Meanwhile these three remain, faith, hope and love; and the great of these is love.”

Take some time to carefully read and meditate on the words of the Institution of the Eucharist: Mt 26,26-29; Mk 14,22-25; Lk 22,15-20; 1 Cor 11,23-26. These words indicate to us Christians the rationale of charity: a life “broken” and given for all.

The diamond of work

It is a serious and consistent commitment to one's duties

Meditation

On returning from a trip to France in 1877, Don Bosco visited the FMA community of Alassio. He asked them if they had a lot of work and when they responded in the affirmative, he said: "when I visit your convents and am told that there are piles of work, I feel at ease. **Where there is work, there is no devil**" (EBM XIII, 89)

Work is not an end in itself, it is not to be idolized. It is **a participation in God's creative action of salvation.**

It incorporates one into the category of the poor whom the Lord loves. It makes **us more down-to-earth in humility** because urges us to be available and at the disposal of our brothers and sisters even in the humblest of situations, obliging us to be truly competent in of human promotion and being daily committed to be creative, disciplined and organized...

For us, work becomes a collaboration with Christ for our salvation and the salvation of youth.

What are the characteristics of Salesian work? **First of all, alacrity.** Salesian work is brisk: meaning by that, it must be what I want to do and do it with joy. I'm sure I'll like it. I try not to be like someone reluctant to go to work, like a slave, out of compulsion...

Spontaneity. The Salesian's slogan as Fr Albert Caviglia affirmed is: "I'll go." Not the Salesian blasphemy: "It's not my turn."

Generosity without measure. Even Don Bosco wanted some moderation and at Alassio, he spoke to the sisters about "temperance at work!" In any case, it must neither be minimal nor reduced to convenient hours, but "full time."

Initiative. Don Bosco was driven by the idea that industry would spawn jobs and when they did not, he qualified himself in order to work more proficiently.

Another trait, therefore, that is linked to initiative is **one's commitment to study and to update oneself** in the field of one's competence because of cultural changes constantly taking place. Study also enters the work environment: first of all, to update one's competence in the sciences of faith and those of the secular city.

Asceticism: is the pedagogical value of the effort to work which is a participation in the mystery of the cross of Christ and in solidarity with the condition of the worker in Nazareth.

Finally, **the ecstasy of action:** is a mystical thrust, explained by St Francis de Sales is a witness to a strong interiority.

In the dream Don Bosco recalled that

- **Work** is a powerful weapon against all the temptations of the devil.
- Work, the exact fulfilment of **one's duties**, is absolutely essential for a young person who wants to overcome laziness and idleness.
- The exact fulfilment of one's duties not only strengthens you but gives you the opportunity to use your time well while giving you a sense of fulfilment and contribute to the common good.

Risks and temptations...

Working today! On the one hand job stability is uncertain, on the other hand there is fatigue caused by one's personal commitment to work seriously and consistently. The greatest risk young people face today is not knowing how to manage their time well. Too much time is wasted or lost or badly planned!

"Sleep, theft and idleness" are realities that Don Bosco sees on the moth-eaten mantle. The remedy for these 'moths' is a sense of seriousness, commitment and industry or the discipline hard work. These are attitudes that need to be cultivated to combat the temptation of listlessness and "laziness."

It is necessary to recover the beauty of a "hardworking life that transforms man and makes him, in a certain sense, more of a man." As he rediscovers the value of a job that offers him the possibility of serious remuneration, he learns to manage responsibly his life, without excesses or waste.

Journeying in the world of work...

- First, learn to use your time well.
- Let your work/study live as a participation in God's creative work.
- Try to flee from being "immobile." Don't let laziness get the better of you: be a person who employs grit and courage in all that you do.
- Be organized and balanced in your work/study. Get up early and go to bed early. Avoid excesses.

Activity

Plan your day well. Try to get it “organized” in an intelligent way.

Do I check every day my level of seriousness and sense of responsibility with which I worked during the day gone by? Did I earn my daily bread because of my sense of commitment?

Do I look fervently at St Joseph as a model of hard work and do I invoke his help?

Prayer

Prayer to be responsible at work

We discover you, our Creator, as a God who works:

You mould, shape, build, excavate, spread out, cultivate, pasture, heal, think and teach.

If you work, then all that we do,
says something about your work.

Place in our hard-working hands the gift of your creation.

By preserving and cultivating the work of creation,
by obeying the designs contained in things,
we prolong their purpose,
we lead them to their goal.

But our work, Lord, also knows its limits,
pride, sin and injustice.

May our actions reflect
and mirror your activities.

The Gospel of work

I see you once more, **Mary**, busy at home in Nazareth, carefully stoking the fire as you cook; sweeping and washing and drying your child, who, like any other must have come home dirty from the games he played outside in the street.

Joseph, I see you once more working the wood in your workshop at Nazareth; you pass the plane several times, chamfering its edges with the chisel, driving nails into wood with the hammer and in the meantime patiently teaching that Child who is not yours, the tricks of the trade.

Tell us, what went through your mind while you worked? Share with us the secrets of your thoughts, the yearnings of your prayers, your anxieties

and worries, the uncertainties tearing at your soul despite your awareness at the thought of the plan that God had chosen for you.

We need homes like yours to be able to breathe love, acceptance, the dignity of humility and honest work. Give us a sense to know our limits, the joy of a simple job, the awareness that everything is given to us, and the joy of working hard to beautify our world.

From the encyclical *Laborem Exercens* of Saint John Paul II

(n.4) The Church finds *in the very first pages of the Book of Genesis*, the source of her conviction that work is a fundamental dimension of human existence on earth (...) When man, who had been created “in the image of God...male and female,” hears the words: “Be fruitful and *multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it*,” even though these words do not refer directly and explicitly to work, beyond any doubt, they indirectly indicate it as an activity for man to carry out in the world. Indeed, they sow its very deepest essence. Man is the image of God partly through the mandate received from his Creator to subdue, to dominate the earth. In carrying out this mandate, man, every human being, reflects the very action of the Creator of the universe.

(n.6) While *being God*, he became like us in all things, devoted most of the years of his life on earth to *manual work* at the carpenter’s bench. This circumstance constitutes in itself the most eloquent “Gospel of work,” showing that the basis for determining the value of human work is not primarily the kind of work being done but the fact that the one who is doing it is a person. (...) In fact, in the final analysis it is always man who is *the purpose of the work*, whatever work it is that is done by man – even if the common scale of values rates it as the merest “service,” as the most monotonous even the most alienating work.

The diamond of temperance

It is a sense of self-control, balance and deliberation

Meditation

Spirituality also involves an ascetical dimension, of resistance or spiritual combat.

It is linked to the penitential dimension which is essential for Christian maturity. **Without it, both the beginning and the progress along the path of conversion is impossible.**

This is not a very congenial aspect considering the present-day sensitivities which tend to want to satisfy desires and justify it. The formula that summarizes this idea is “**coetera tolle**” meaning ‘to leave the rest’ so that one can direct one’s energies to the “*da mihi animas,*” which is actually the possibility of living inwardly for the glory of God and seeking the salvation of the soul. These two aspects are related.

Temperance is that cardinal virtue that moderates one’s drives, words and actions according to reason and the requirements of the Christian life. **Contenance, humility, sobriety, simplicity and austerity revolve around it.** Its manifestations in daily life are: a sense of balance, that is, everything deliberately done, with a suitable discipline, having an ability to collaborate, a sense of inner and outer serenity, a positive relationship with everyone, but especially with young people, being serene and authoritative.

Temperance is above being in a “permanent athletic state” for any request from God; striving to free oneself from overly obsessive ties, the influence of personal tastes and needs that might create addictions.

Temperance as applied to work: it is the order by which actions have a motivated sense of purpose and priority; **but it is also applied to one’s fraternal relationships:** indeed, without good relations this is not possible. Brotherly love implies self-control, being attentive, control of one’s spontaneous feelings, resolving conflicts, sympathetic to the sufferings of others.

Some qualities of Salesian temperance:

It must be cheerful: It was said of Don Bosco that when he seemed more cheerful than usual, he must have had more severe difficulties.

It must happen every day: it is not a question of occasionally “heroic” moments, but in the ‘dust and dung’ of every day.

It must be kind: A coarse, rude, unbalanced, irritable, suspicious, vindictive young man etc... immediately becomes unpleasant and is shunned.

It must be simple: that is, so spontaneous as to have nothing complicated.

It must be intelligent: that is possessing temperance achieved without ostentation, but with strategic timeliness and sense of opportunity.

It must be heroic: all the qualities mentioned above, take nothing away from the challenge of temperance; it has its particularly demanding moments.

Above all it must be compassionate: in short, it is a question of taking up Christ’s cross every day with courage, but doing it without blowing trumpets, in a pleasant and attractive manner, which highlights that the Salesian life is not a patch of thorny brambles but a pergola or roses, even if these, in addition to their perfume, beauty and colour it involves continuous bloody pricks.

In the dream Don Bosco recalls

- “The fire goes out if you remove the wood.” Temperance is the ability to **balance** and measure everything you do.
- Temperance is the result of one’s personal ability to **restrain** one’s reactions and passions.
- It is the ability to employ “**common sense**” in everything, so as to have balanced behaviour and reactions.

Risks and temptations...

Don Bosco acknowledges that in the life of a young person, when there is no control, there is disorder. In the dream he sees this message corresponding to a lack of temperance. “The throat: their god is their belly.”

Today there is gross subjectivism that unbalances life and relationships. “I’ll permitted everything” – unbridled wildness, disorder, gluttony or sensuality...

The beauty of a temperate life is the joy of living every relationship serenely and deliberately. The ancients rightly stated that: “Temperance is the mother of health.”

In order to journey temperately:

- First of all, the discipline and control of every action.
- Control of the eyes, the appetites and the senses.
- The ability to balance and make one's everyday choices seriously inspired by Gospel values.
- Learn to practice a little "mortification" (= dying to what is negative within me): in my appetites, in what I see, in the use of the computer, the cell phone... It is healthy mental, physical and spiritual "hygiene" which helps you to progress along the path to maturity and fulfilment.

Activity

Carefully check your day and learn to be temperate in every kind of behaviour.

These questions may help you to put your day in perspective:

- Is my agenda really balanced?
- Do I have enough time to converse with members of my family, friends and family, for silence, prayer and rest?
- Do I take time for meals or do I just shovel it down?
- Is my time well organized, or do I let myself drift from one activity to another?
- Am I capable of being "deliberate" in the use of the means of social communication?

Prayer

Balance

(S. Augustine)

Lord, give us

Credibility without arrogance,
cheerfulness without being superficial,
seriousness without desperation,
honesty without presumption,
severity without malice,
strength without strictness,
goodness without weakness,
mercy without liberality,
altruism without exhibitionism,

pacifism without falsehood,
vigilant without being fixated,
sane without being indolent,
secure without being imprudent,
poverty without misery,
richness with avarice,
prudence without diffidence.

May we be
educated without seeming to be so,
reconcilers but inclined to wisdom,
generous but not impatient,
hospitable but sober;
let us work with our hands,
but without trusting in ourselves.
Give us light and take away from us
the darkness of ignorance

Praise to you God most High

St Francis of Assisi

You are holy, Lord God,

who does wonderful things.

You are strong. You are great, you are most high.

You are the almighty king. You Holy Father,

King of Heaven and earth.

You are three and one, the Lord God of gods;

You are the good, all good, the highest good,

Lord God, living and true.

You are love, charity; you are wisdom,

You are humility, you are patience,

You are beauty, you are meekness,

You are security, you are rest.

You are gladness and joy,

You are our hope, you are justice,

You are moderation,

You are all our riches to sufficiency.

You are beauty, you are meekness,

You are the protector,

You are our custodian and defender,
YOU are strength, you are refreshment.
You are our hope, you are our charity,
You are our sweetness
You are our eternal life:
Great and wonderful Lord,
Almighty God, Merciful Saviour.

Some biblical references

Wis. 8, 7 "Do you love justice?

All the virtues are the result of wisdom's work:

Justice and courage, self-control and understanding.

Life can offer us nothing more valuable than these.

Sir 6,2-4 "Do not let your passions carry you away

This can tear your soul to pieces like a bull;

You will be left like a dead tree without any leaves or fruit;

Evil desire will destroy you and make you a joke to your enemies."

Lk 8,14 "The seeds that fell among thorn bushes stand for those who hear; but the worries and riches and pleasures of this life crown in and choke them, and their fruit never ripens"

Lk 21,34-35 "Be on your guard! Don't let yourselves become occupied with too much feasting and drinking and with the worries of this life, or that Day may suddenly catch you like a trap. For it will come upon all people everywhere on earth."

The diamond of obedience

It is believing in God's love

Meditation

When speaking about obedience we need to specify what kind of obedience it is.

Ours is not obedience to a traffic light or a traffic policeman; it is not even pedagogical obedience, even if it is used in order to educate one to freedom.

Obedience, in its broad and Christian sense according to the New Testament, is a spiritual attitude that accompanies the exercise of mature freedom!

Obeying is a conscious expression of someone deeply loved and a totally free sonship enthusiastic enough to carry out the Father's will, not like an employee, a soldier, not even a boy, but with Jesus Christ as his model. Christ brought us no less than the mystery of the Trinity poured out into the human dimension of the incarnation of the Son. **The human will of Christ,** his freedom as a man, means always **seeking to do the Father's will.** Indeed, Christ has a human soul in perfect harmony with the Divine Sonship. What belongs to the Father is his: "Not my will, but yours be done!" **This is the rationale that illumines the concept of Christian obedience.**

The foundation of this kind of obedience is not inferiority, neither does it issue from a lack of maturity, nor is it an exploitation of one's abilities but it is the most **intelligent attitude that a free person can have:** to do what is best, absolutely the best. Freedom is an option for what is good, so much so that in heaven **before God, one is not "free" to choose again because one has already chosen Him** with all the energy of one's will. Even if we never really know for certain what the Father's will objectively is, we do have qualified signs of His will. For this **we need special mediations.**

That is why we see this profound obedience shining in **Mary,** who says her "yes" and lives fully the entire mystery of the obedient Christ. The Church too, the spouse of Christ, has experienced this obedience of faith down the centuries modelling herself on Mary.

Christ, Mary and the Church have given us the elements that constitute a solid basis for our reflection on obedience. They present us the mystery of Christian obedience in its depth and originality.

In the dream Don Bosco recalls

- Obedience means being fully available to God's love. That is why, obedience is everything in the Christian life.
- Obedience means listening and putting into practice the Word of God as Mary, the Mother of the Church and the Help of Christians did.
- A young person who knows how to live in this manner lays the foundation of a "virtuous" life that is honest and faithful.
- Obedience that is docile to the promptings of God's love, is a sure way to reach holiness and true joy: "It is the foundation and the crowning glory of the edifice of holiness" says Don Bosco.

Risks and temptations...

The greatest risk that young people face today is the "gap" in the linkages. They don't know who to ignore and who to trust. Christian obedience suggests to us an attitude of surrender to the One for whom "nothing is impossible."

Too many young people "risk" letting their lives get empty. In his dream Don Bosco rightly places nothing in the place of obedience in the completely moth-eaten mantle. That is the symbol of a life without meaning and foundation. Another temptation faced today is the lack of availability. Too many young people are unable to "savour" the beauty of life because they are not "open" to living the demands of the Gospel

Journeying obediently

- Learn to use the Gospel everyday as a reference for your day. Read it eagerly and constantly.
- Recognize the Love of God in you and around you. Try to "**respond**" to this love by obeying the logic of life.
- **Be obedient to spiritual guidance** as part of the Lord's promptings. If you don't have a guide yet, it's about time you find one!
- Spend some time on your knees before the Lord to listen to him and **strengthen your will** to obey his Word.
- Make yourself **available**. Don't miss the opportunities to live the demands of the Gospel and the Christian life.

Activity

Read some Gospel passages to relate and compare them with your life, asking yourself if you are obedient “surrendered” to these promptings:

Jn 21,15-23 “Do you love me?”;

Mt 8,23-27 “Why are you afraid?”;

Mt 11,28-30 “Come to me”;

Mt 14,22-23 “It is I, do not be afraid”;

Lk 10,38-42 “There is only one thing you need”;

Jn 10,1-18 “I am the good shepherd”;

Jn 14,1-11 “I am the way, the truth and the life”;

Jn 15,1-17 “Remain in me.”

Prayer

Reflect and meditation on these comments of St. John Paul II to young people:

“Listen to the voice of Jesus in the depths of your hearts! His words tell you who you are as a Christian. They teach you what you must do to remain in his love.”

“If, deep in your heart, you hear the call to the priesthood or the consecrated life, don’t be afraid to follow Christ on the way of the Cross.”

“Even though I’ve lived in the midst of so much darkness under harsh totalitarian regimes, I have seen enough to be unshakably convinced that no difficulty, no fear is so great that it can completely suffocate the hope that springs up eternally in the hearts of young people.”

“Choose between life and death, between truth and lies. Don’t let hope die! We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures; on the contrary, we are the sum of the Father’s love for us and our real capacity to become the image of his Son.”

“Salt seasons and gives flavour to food. In following Christ, you must change and improve the ‘flavour’ of human history. Through your faith, hope and love, through your intelligence, courage and perseverance, you must humanize the world in which we live.”

Psalm 130 *"The Psalm of surrender"*

Lord, my heart is not proud,
nor haughty my eyes;

I have not gone after things too great,
nor things greater than me.

I am serene and at peace,
Like a child in its mother's arms,
even so is my soul.

Israel, hope in the Lord,
both now and forever.

The diamond of poverty

It is the heart's attitude of simplicity and trust

Meditation

When speaking about poverty we need a little perspective: **the attitude of artists**. An artist doesn't despise economic goods, he needs them; however, his interests are elsewhere, **interests that are more beautiful to him**, to which he gives all his acumen, his initiative and his time. When speaking therefore, of evangelical poverty, we seem to be closer to artists than to others.

In a certain sense, if you like, Jesus appears to be like an artist of salvation or integral liberation; not because he despises economic goods (of which he is the creator!) but because he promotes the values of salvation that all people need.

So, **evangelical poverty**, rather than gauging it by standards of economic deprivation or a lack of means, or caused by a situation of social injustice, **it is measured above all by the interests of the heart, the orientations of genius, of a plan of life, of service to others**. Above all, it refers to the heart and the soul.

Evangelical poverty looks to Christ as a way of life to be conformed to.

His "kenosis" is the heart of his life as Saviour.

He is the artist who is preparing to create his masterpiece: liberation, salvation and redemption! That is the manner in which we are to reflect on evangelical poverty.

This type of poverty is for all Christians, for all disciples. The beatitudes are for everyone: everyone must be poor in spirit. Evangelical poverty is a basic attitude of all disciples.

And we see this in the life of the first Christian community in their enthusiasm to follow Christ, fully embracing that mindset. Communion of goods ensured detachment of the heart and placed the goods to benefit a growth in communion which also served to solve the problems of those who were the most needy. We could say what the Fathers said, what Don Bosco himself repeated: "what is over and above belongs to the poor.

As you can see, this is a whole prophetic horizon.

Don Bosco was very practical when he spoke of poverty. We can say that Don Bosco certainly insisted a lot on detachment of heart, but also on very practical expressions of sobriety, deprivation, lifestyle and work.

“Several venerable priests, leading members of the diocesan clergy, also came to see him. [...] Others, recovering from their shock, jokingly insisted on knowing what habit his new monks would wear [they made fun of him, but Don Bosco was smarter than them]. “Well,” Don Bosco replied, “they will all be in shirt sleeves.” Laughter and ridicule greet this strange disclosure. After letting them have their joke, Don Bosco added with a smile: “Did I say something funny? Don’t you know, Fathers, that being in shirt sleeves is a sign of poverty and that a religious congregation cannot last without the practice of poverty?” (EBM 2, 320-321).

In the dream Don Bosco recalls

- Poverty is that attitude that makes me closer to the poor, not in word but in deeds too.
- It requires a lifestyle comprising of **sobriety** and simplicity. It is necessary to love just the essentials and resemble the Lord Jesus.
- It means loving **simplicity** in order to focus on what really matters: “It opens the doors of heaven to us!”
- “Bed, clothes, drinks and money.” That is the portrait of the “rich man” who thinks only of himself and has no time and resources for others. Beware of allowing yourself to be overly relaxed, excessively allowing yourself too every comfort.

Risks and temptations...

Following Jesus, as Christians, involves a simple and sober lifestyle that allows us to renounce the superfluous, and what dominates us and therefore opens us up to others. This is precisely the temptation and the struggle today. We have everything and we struggle to give up something. We prefer “relaxation” to living with the essentials. Too many young people are tied to what they have more than to who they are! Thus, they live avariciously and not generously; they are greedy and wasteful, rather than striving to develop the habit of sharing. Too much of anything numbs the senses and especially the sense of gratitude. We consider that we are entitled to everything, everything is taken for granted, instead of “do you not know that whatever you have is what you have received?” (1 Cor 4:7) Perhaps we need to go back to the habit of saying ‘thank you,’ to be grateful, to marvel at things, and stop complaining too much if something is lacking.

Journeying in poverty

I'm proposing some questions to test how concretely you are living evangelical poverty:

- Do I always own too much?
- Am I convinced that nothing I have is mine?
- Normally, do I choose for myself what is ordinary and common?
- Do I recall someone who is struggling when I use the goods of this world?
- Do I make myself available to serve my neighbour in a selfless manner?
- Am I sensitive to the needs of others, even if they don't express it?
- Do I count on God's help when it comes to serving him? ("seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and the rest will be given to you.")

Activity

"Even if someone has a lot, his happiness doesn't depend on what he has." (cf. Lk 12, 15) The Gospels continually warn us of the dangers of wealth. There is truly a danger of getting lost in abundance and losing life.

Prayer

Read and reflect on this reflection by Carlo Carretto

Poverty doesn't mean having or not having money, having or not having fleas. Poverty is not something material: it is a beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." It is a way of being, of thinking, of loving; it is a gift of the Spirit. Being poor in spirit means, first of all, being free from what is called the 'fashionable' - it means freedom. I don't buy a blanket because it is fashionable; I buy a blanket because I need it because otherwise my baby will shiver in bed.

Poverty as a beatitude is not just a truth, freedom and justice. It is and will always remain, love bordering on infinite perfection. Poverty is detachment, it is freedom, it is above all, truth. Poverty is love for the poor Jesus, that is, towards the voluntary acceptance limits. Jesus could have been rich; he didn't need to limit his wishes. No, he wanted to be poor to participate in the universal limitation of the poor, to endure the lack of something, to suffer in his flesh the harsh reality that weighs on man who seeks his bread, and in his spirit, the perennial instability of those who do not have anything.

Unless I love, really love, how will I be able to support a third of humanity that is threatened with starvation, while I keep all my stability and economic security? By doing so, I will be a good Christian, but I will certainly not be a saint; and today, there is an inflation of good Christians, while the world needs saints.

Knowing how to accept instability, putting oneself in situations where, from time to time, I have to say with a little anxiety “give us today our daily bread,” because the pantry is empty; have the courage, for the love of God and neighbour, to give without measure and, above all, to keep that great window of living faith in the Providence of an Almighty God, keeping my soul open to heaven: this is necessary. Wealth is a slow poison that strikes almost insensibly, paralyzing the soul at just the moment of its maturity.

Prayer of Charles de Foucauld

(Spiritual Works)

“Oh my Lord Jesus, how poor will he soon be, who loving you with all his heart will not be able to be richer than his Beloved. O my Lord Jesus, how poor will he soon be who, thinking that everything that is done to one of these little ones is done to You, that everything that is not done to them, is not done to You, by relieving all miseries within his reach. How poor will he soon be who accepts your words with faith: “If you want to be perfect, sell what you have and give it to the poor.... Blessed are the poor... whoever has abandoned his goods for me, will receive a hundred times more and in heaven, eternal life...” and many others... O my God, I do not know if it is possible for certain souls to see You poor and remain willingly rich, to see themselves so much greater than their Master, their Beloved, not wanting to resemble You in everything, as far as it depends on them, and above all in your humiliations, yes, I want them to love You, oh my God, but nevertheless I believe that something is missing from their love and that in any case I cannot conceive love without a need, an imperative need for conformity of resemblance and above all participation in all the pains, all the difficulties, all the harshness of life... Being rich, at ease, living sweetly with my goods, when You have been poor, in hardship, living painfully from exhausting work, which I cannot, oh my God... I cannot love like this.”

Prayer of the dissatisfied (*A. Pronzato*)

There is someone who cannot help but be prominent.

I'm satisfied with being just a person.

There are those who struggle to earn a place.

I am content to occupy the penultimate place (the last is always too visible).

There are those who aspire to be famous.

I am satisfied to know that You do not lose sight of me in my smallness.

There are those who are worried about their image.

I pay attention to what the reflection my conscience sends back to me.

And then, there are those who care about becoming someone.

I already have too much trouble staying myself.

There are those who absolutely do not want to lose face.

It is enough for me not to lose your gaze.

There are those who claim to impose themselves to gain attention.

I am happy not to clutter.

There are those who like applause.

I am happy to cause a slight vibration in some heart.

There are those who are busy making a name for themselves.

I am happy when You call my name.

There are those who do everything to be seen.

I am content to be and to be there by disappearing.

There are those who are obsessed with arriving.

I would be content to know when is the right time to leave.

There are those who consider themselves indispensable.

I am satisfied when I get my turn.

There are those...

You please me Lord.

The diamond of chastity

It is the ability to love in an orderly manner

Meditation

In Don Bosco's spirit, there is a strong message on purity. It is a special message that we can call the "attraction to purity": a suitable message for youth.

Salesian chastity does not require an austere face or a defensive and unfriendly demeanour, but a smile and kindness and all the elements proper to kindness. Don Bosco used to say: "Charity, chastity and humility are three queens who always go together: one cannot exist without the others" (MB 9, 706). Pastoral charity gives one fervour and courage of witness; the splendour that chastity gives, is seen in the rectitude of relationships and the sensitivity of kindness; humility removes the wood from the fire and ensures the centrality of God.

The Christian virtue of chastity refers to human love in the concrete fabric of his sexuality. We understand very well that it refers to a reality that not only affects our biology but our entire being.

To a humanity that interpreted the values of "love" and "life" only on a natural level, Jesus Christ offers us the possibility of interpreting them from an original perspective of transcendence. He needed the incarnation of God to make this other possibility understood and practiced.

This is a real leap in quality. In the celibate Jesus Christ, his human fabric, his psychosomatic dynamic, his sexuality, his life and his human love, all that made him a man like us, our brother in solidarity with all the instincts and passions of the whole lineage; was intimately and deeply permeated by the substantial filiation to the Father. By sending the Holy Spirit, He enables men and women to demonstrate a new way of interpreting sexuality in love.

He re-established, let's say, Marriage according to the true design of creation. Not only that: he also wanted to raise marriage to a "Sacrament" of the New Covenant. He revealed his dignity in making it the deepest and most characteristic expression of the mystery of the Incarnation and the relationship between him and the Church!

On the other hand, he did not make celibacy into a sacrament; however, he made it a witness to the specific life and sanctity in the Church, the very characteristic and vital expression of the global sacramentality of the whole

People of God as the “Body of Christ.” In the Salesian spirit, evangelical chastity lived in radicality is, together with obedience and poverty (of which we have already spoken), a “driving force,” a “power from within.” Cardinal Ratzinger said: “Where virginity is made possible as a form of life, the infinite value of man is perceived in a luminous way, not only for his higher function of transmitting life, but specifically for the sublime fact of being a person.”

In the dream Don Bosco recalls:

- **The pure of heart** behold the secrets of God and contemplate God himself.
- Those who live and love in an “**orderly**” manner exude a very special glow that attracts, fascinates and throws us back to God.
- Chastity is necessary for a young person if he wants to train his **heart** to love in a comprehensive and enduring way.
- All young people are capable of commitment in this field; they are able to develop deep and constructive **friendships**.
- Learning to love requires a kind of **education** of the heart, battling against concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life.

Risks and temptations...

Sexuality is really good, beautiful and holy because God has inserted it into our corporeality. We must not be afraid. It is also at the same time, a very fragile and delicate reality built on a very slim equilibrium which is very easy to alter and sometimes even skew with serious repercussions to a person’s sense of balance. Too many young people “hurt themselves” in this field. The risk is to trivialize sexuality, to reduce it to a harmless commodity. A purely “genital” sexuality, lived wildly, somehow dissociates the person suffocating his highest energies, such as the ability to think, decide, persevere and to love.

It is not surprising then, that the Christian insistence on staying away from occasions of sin and cultivating purity, even in the sensual, affective, psychological and spiritual spheres.

Journeying chastely

Some practical aids to grow chastely. First of all, and above all, cultivate an intense and fervent relationship of love with Jesus.

In the second place, encourage everything that helps raise your affectivity.

To be concrete:

- Respect for the 'other,' and in a special way, the other sex;
- Friendship and meeting up with people and groups who share and value chastity;
- Creativity in work and whatever we do;
- Knowing how to say 'no' to immediate and fleeting gratifications in order to achieve a more stable sense of wellbeing.

Activity

Practice being a 'total' gift. Try to live, loving God and others more gratefully with more commitment and balance. Educating your heart passes through your commitment to fight, daily and courageously against the forms of immediate and selfish expression of your sexuality.

Be moderate and cautious in using the internet!! Remember: "Blessed are the pure in heart; they shall see God!"

Prayer

Come, Spirit of power

(Mother Anna Maria Canopi)

Come, Spirit of power,
walk with us on our journey,
for the desert of trials is vast and frightful,
it is where the enemy attacks us
surprising us with devious and treacherous weapons.

Come, Spirit of power,
support our every step,
inspire our every thought,
purify our every desire,
so that, following Jesus,
our hunger may not seek food
other than the Word of God,
our faith need not want to seek other certainties
but only total abandonment;
our thirst for greatness
may only be satisfied

by searching for the glory of the Father,
and our hearts remain open to receive
his gratuitous love,
the pure joy of the Kingdom of Heaven.
Amen.

*This is how we are asked to love. Challenge yourself and meditate with
God's Word.
(1 Cor 13)*

"I may be able to speak the languages of human beings and even of angels,
but if I have no love, my speech is no more than a noisy gong or a clanging
bell.

I may have the gift of inspired preaching; I may have all knowledge and
understand all secrets; I may have all the faith needed to move mountains
- but if I have no love, I am nothing. I may give away everything I have,
and even give up my body to be burnt - but if I have no love, this does me
no good.

Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not
ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs;
love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth.

Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, love, and patience that never fail.

The diamond of reward

It is the joy of Paradise!

Meditation

In the time of Don Bosco, at his house, there was much talk of Paradise: **“A piece of Paradise sets everything right.”**

Witnessing to the values of Paradise today is **urgently prophetic** for our world, more especially for young people. Seeking happiness is a fundamental human tendency, but the right manner in which to seek it is no longer known. That is why there's an immense sense of growing disillusionment.

In Don Bosco's spirituality there is a constant concern to urge his charges **to familiarize themselves with Paradise**, almost as it was **the deepest yearning of the heart**.

The Salesian spirit breathes the air of joy and a dynamism of hope nourished by a robust and profound “dialogue with the Holy Spirit” in the interior life and a concrete “sense of the Eucharist.” **Daily life rests on its celebration and in every house its vital centre is the tabernacle.**

And Mary too is present in every Salesian community. **But then, we look for other friends in God's house: The Saints.** Conversing with St. Joseph, Don Bosco, with Mazzarello and Don Rua, with Dominic Savio and Laura Vicuña and Don Rinaldi; with Mgr. Versiglia and Fr Caravario and Sister Teresa Valsè and Sr Eusebia Palomino and others, we engage in a real homely dialogue.

This is what the thought of Paradise suggests to us: a sense of **“feeling at home”** with **God, with Christ, with Mary and the saints**; feeling their presence in our home, the family atmosphere that gives us a feeling of Paradise in our daily environment.

It is the House of God; the fullness of all that is good and joyful without anything lacking. We look for words and images, we stammer but we understand that we are affirming an absolute and profound truth for which our hearts yearn **because the Lord has infected our hearts, so to speak, a participation in his very nature.**

The awareness of the Reward must make us also exclaim everyday like Don Bosco: **“So much is good that every ache and pain becomes a delight!”**

In the dream Don Bosco recalls:

- “A piece of Paradise sets right everything!” We must not forget that Paradise is the crowning of all our efforts.
- God himself wants us in Paradise! A young man cannot fail to look to Heaven to revive his joy in Christianity.
- The joy of the Reward strengthens his commitment and gives new energy to all his charitable, spiritual and human activities.
- The certainty that God wants us all in Paradise, makes the young person capable of vigilance and Charity, waiting in active expectation.

Risks and temptations...

“Our legacy will be the goods of the earth,” is what we read on the moth-eaten mantle. The most recurrent temptation today is that of horizontalism, which means, seeing things only from a human point of view. Many young people do not know how to look up and have significant perspectives and horizons! The quality of one’s life also depends on the meaning that one attributes to everything he does, including suffering and dying.

Journeying towards Paradise

Try to set your life along these three tracks and you will discover the joy, not only of the expectation of Paradise, but also that of a personal encounter with the One who awaits you in the Kingdom of Heaven.

- **Beholding the Risen One:** is an experience of profound and constant conversion.
- **Meeting the Risen One:** is a mission experience. You recognize it as your days and relationships unfold.
- **Witnessing to the Risen One:** is an experience of a spiritual relationship. Your ability to be a credible sign of God’s love is at stake.

Activity

The life of a Christian is therefore lived “*waiting in hope for the joyful coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*” This is a daily commitment:

Waiting becomes VIGILANCE not letting oneself be overtaken by sleep, but keeping oneself ready to welcome the Lord who comes.

Waiting is detached. “Be careful lest your hearts grow coarse.” (Lk 21,34).

Waiting is a struggle against all temptation: “Be on your guard and watchful, because your enemy, like a roaring lion is looking for someone to devour. Stand up to him, strong in faith.” (1 Peter 5,8-9)

Waiting is prayerful: “Watch and pray at all times” (Lk 21,36).

Waiting is laborious: which is a life lived with commitment in carrying out one’s daily duties and charitably towards one’s neighbour: “Well done, good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over a little...” (Lk 19,12-26).

Prayer

God of life,
you have called us,
to communion with You
by being faithful
to your personal
and eternal covenant;
help us to live
in this present time
in hope,
of the life without end,
as we give dignity and flavour
to each moment
as it prepares us
for infinite joy
when we will joyfully participate
for days without end
in your love.
Where, in the peace of your Spirit,
we will sing forever
the canticle of those who have risen
and will be united with your Son,
the Lord of life
and history
the only conqueror of sin and death.
Amen.

Letter to Diogenetus

Meditate on this wonderful page from the first centuries and pick up some ideas on how to live your day in "waiting" and "vigilance."

The difference between Christians and the rest of mankind is not a matter of nationality, or language, or custom. Christians do not live apart in separate cities of their own. speak any special dialect, nor practise any eccentric way of life. The doctrine they profess is not the invention of busy human minds and brains, nor are they, like some adherents of this or that school of human thought.

They pass their lives in whatever township – Greek or foreign – each man's lot has determined; and conform to ordinary local usage in their clothing, diet, and other habits. Nevertheless, the organization of their community does exhibit some features that are remarkable, and even surprising. For instance, though they are residents at home in their own countries, their behaviour there is more like that of transients; they take their full part as citizens, but they also submit to anything and everything as if they were aliens. For them, any foreign country is a motherland, and any motherland is a foreign country. Like other men, they marry and beget children, though they do not expose their infants. Any Christian is free to share his neighbour's table, but never his marriage-bed. Though destiny has placed them here in the flesh, they do not live after the flesh; their days are passed on the earth, but their citizenship is above in the heavens. They obey the prescribed laws, but in their own private lives they transcend the laws. They show love to all men – and all men persecute them. They are misunderstood and condemned; yet by suffering death they are quickened into life. They are poor, yet making many rich; lacking all things, yet having all things in abundance. They are dishonoured, yet made glorious in their very dishonour; slandered, yet vindicated. They repay calumny with blessings, and abuse with courtesy. For the good they do, they suffer stripes as evildoers; and under the strokes they rejoice like men given new life. Jews assail them as heretics, and Greeks harass them with persecutions; and yet of all their ill-wishers there is not one who can produce good grounds for his hostility.

To put it briefly, the relation of Christians to the world that of a soul to the body. As the soul is diffused through every part of the body, so are Christians through all the cities of the world. The soul, too, inhabits the

body, while the same time forming no part of it; and Christians inhabit the world, but they are not part of the world. The invisible herself, is immured within a visible body; Christians can be recognized in the world, but their Christianity itself remains hidden from the eye. The flesh hates the soul, and wars against her without any provocation, because she is an obstacle to its own self-indulgence; and the world similarly hates the Christians without provocation, because they are opposed to its pleasures.

All the same, the soul loves the flesh and all its members, despite their hatred for her; and Christians, too, love those who hate them. The soul, shut up inside the body, nevertheless holds the body together; and though they are within the world as in a dungeon, it is Christians who hold the world together. The soul, which is immortal, must dwell in a mortal tabernacle; the Christians, as they sojourn for a while in the midst of corruptibility here, look for incorruptibility in the heavens. Finally, just as to be stinted of food and drink makes for the soul's improvement, so when Christians are every day subjected to ill-treatment, they increase the more in numbers. Such is the high post of duty in which God has placed them, and it their moral duty not to shrink from it.

The diamond of fasting

It is a tool to reinvigorate the spirit

Meditation

Food is certainly a gift from God; its deprivation acquires meaning because of the reasons that accompany it. **You might want to express humility, fraternal solidarity or hope. You might want to intensify your awareness of God, of your dependence and surrender to Him, becoming aware of your own defects or your own sins and those of others, of the dangers to one's own flesh, of deep passions and inclinations.**

In the Church, Christians fast in order to do penance, to participate in the passion of Christ, to intensify one's prayer or to suppress one's passions. **In fasting one exercises a pedagogy** that helps one to live some spiritual values to the full: facilitating the raising of the spirit to evangelical goals, making reparation for one's sins and faults, to overcome one's difficulties and temptations, to ask for graces and favours. Our good Father used it. **Don Bosco emphasized fasting and mortifications** in the most genuine sense of the Christian tradition.

Fasting must not be reduced to the deprivation of gastronomic pleasures, but it extends over a much wider field. Fr Rinaldi alludes to the **"mortification of the senses."** But I would say it goes beyond the realm of the senses to embrace the entire gamut of mortification.

It is a question of using common sense when one undertakes it and with reasonable moderation, but this involves a truly ascetic initiative, seeking some practical privation to ensure that one is serious and concretely undertakes a commitment to self-control and expiation, awareness of doing it and above all, personally.

In fact, the field of mortifications is certainly above all, personal, something with concerns one's own initiative; it is better that no one knows.

There are many possibilities for the mortification of the senses, especially the eyes: they are the door to fantasy. The eyes must be controlled, especially today, concerning shows, people, places, magazines, advertisements etc. Then there is the vast area regarding **the mortification of the affections:** the custody of the heart.

Other areas are those concerning vanity and duplicity or insincerity. There is a whole **field of self-love and susceptibility.**

Certainly, a very practical field is the exercise of mortification to avoid **idleness** at all costs: it is in fact, the rust that corrodes the soul.

Therefore: **it is proper to the Salesian spirit to practice mortification by seeking out concrete and common-sense renunciations**, without being bound to them too strictly; we must be loose, free, not slaves to the small things that we invent for ourselves. **Intelligent mortification is such that no one notices.**

The fundamental motivation of Christian mortification is a conscious participation in faith in the passion and death of Christ; in the mystery of the Cross as a characteristic sign of a Christian. For us the Cross is no longer a sign of defeat, humiliation, helplessness and bitterness, but a paradoxical sign of true love that it is the love of one person that saved the world.

In his dream, Don Bosco recalls:

- Fasting is a necessary element on the journey along the spiritual life and asceticism.
- It allows you to more easily “die” to everything that takes you away from God (mortification). Mortification drives out all sorts of enemies. It is “the sentinel of all virtues.”
- It helps one to experience solidarity and sharing.
- It helps to make the process of discernment more lucid, to be able to see things with through the eyes of God, therefore to decide on some big issues of life.

Risks and temptations...

Today we are witnessing the almost absolute inability to give up anything and to fast. Society, especially youth, are too weak and sluggish. We no longer believe in the value of “fasting” as a powerful weapon to strengthen the will and to grow internally. Excess has taken the place of sobriety, apathy in place of vigour and weariness in place of fortitude.

Those who are capable not allowing themselves to be enslaved to things, manage to live in freedom, freshness and joy.

Fasting on the journey

I am listing some behaviours that can easily enslave one to what is superfluous and be a reversal for those moving towards an education to sobriety:

- consumption of food without moderation;

- excessive use of alcoholic beverages and smoking;
- an incessant craving for the superfluous, uncritically accepting every fashion;
- abnormal expenses that sometimes accompany popular and even religious occasions;
- the inordinate search for forms of entertainment that do not serve the necessary psychological and physical recovery;
- the frenetic preoccupation which leaves no room for silence, reflection and prayer;
- the excessive use of the TV, internet, etc.

Activity

Christians are called to offer precious witness of faith about the true values of human life, fostering a nostalgia and a search for that spirituality that every person is in great need of.

Fasting for Christians must become a concrete sign of communion with those who suffer from hunger and a form of sharing and help with those who strive to build a more just and more human social life. Try to arrange some “fasts” in your day that help you to grow in sharing and solidarity (get help from the list of possibilities given below).

Prayer

Lord, God, of joy and source of life,

You urge fasting,

because it educates us to recognize our need for you,

it makes us hunger and thirst for you and for your word of life (cf. Mt 4, 4),

it disposes us to prayer and supplication (Mt 17,21; Dn 9,3)

and it renders us strong against the evil spirits (cf. Mk 9,29).

We desire and crave

to give you the pride of place in our life

so that nothing fills us more than you do. Amen.

Holy Spirit,

who led Jesus into the desert,

where he fasted for 40 days and 40 nights,

through the intercession of Mary Most Holy,

Mother of Jesus and my Mother

Help me to FAST

- 1 - from complaining
- 2 - from murmuring
- 3 - from criticizing
- 4 - from useless and hurtful words
- 5 - from malicious intent
- 6 - from insinuations
- 7 - from malicious and evil suspicions
- 8 - from inertia
- 9 - from laziness
- 10 - from abundant and pleasing foods
- 11 - from hobbies
- 12 - from the TV
- 13 - from the PC
- 14 - from curiosities
- 15 - from allusions
- 16 - from superfluous things
- 17 - from drinking anything other than water
- 18 - from too much coffee
- 19 - from half an hour of sleep in order to pray
- 20 - from vain expenses
- 21 - from unnecessary phone calls
- 22 - from inappropriate visits
- 23 - from speaking about myself with pride
- 24 - from immediately opening my mail/messages
- 25 - from immediately doing something I like
- 26 - from vain dreams
- 27 - from envy
- 28 - from jealousy,
- 29 - from resentment,
- 30 - from disengagement,
- 31 - from sensual pleasures,
- 32 - from possessive relationships,
- 33 - from dangerous friendships,
- 34 - from frivolous and dirty talk and jokes
- 35 - from exclusive and excluding relationships

- 36 - from habits that ruin and hinder
- 37 - from distracting pastimes
- 38 - from self-serving activities
- 39 - from drawing attention to oneself
- 40 - from talkativeness
- 41 - from disorder
- 42 - from activism at the expense of prayer
- 43 - from bad and reckless judgments
- 44 - from backbiting
- 45 - from gossip
- 46 - from irresponsible evasions
- 47 - from lying
- 48 - from false needs
- 49 - from impure looks and acts
- 50 - from harmful reading

Conclusion

A fairy tale to summarize...

A professor finished his class and then asked his usual question: "Are there any questions?" A student stood up and asked: "Sir, what is the meaning of life?" Some of the students preparing to leave began giggling. The professor looked at the student for some time trying to determine if he was serious. When he realized that he was, he said: "I'll answer you." He took out his wallet from his trouser pocket and pulled out a small mirror. He said: "I was a child during the war. One day, on the road, I saw a shattered mirror. I kept the largest fragment. Here it is. I began to play with it and let myself be fascinated by the possibility of reflecting the sunlight into dark corners where the sun never shone: deep holes, crevasses, closets...and I kept that small mirror. As I grew up, I began to understand that this was not just child's play; it was a metaphor for life. I too am a fragment of a mirror that I don't entirely know. With it I can send the light of the Sun which is Jesus into the dark corners of people's hearts so that something changes in them. For me, herein lies the meaning of life."

It's a simple story, but it can illustrate a further message that the dream of the ten diamonds wants to convey: **to live the Christian life in a bright and attractive way!** Live it without embarrassment or fear.

"Yesterday you understood a little; today you understand a little more; tomorrow you will get even better as **the light of God develops in you.**"

This statement of St. Augustine sums up very appropriately the logic of this progressive path which results in radiating that light (which is God; a uniquely beautiful diamond, in a significant manner.

Dear young friend, life is a fantastic adventure!

You cannot and must not dull it through superficiality or mediocrity. Don't be afraid to struggle to find, to know and to love that diamond that gives meaning to your life. Don't lose the joy and the enthusiasm of your youth, don't give up in the face of uncertainties. Face every obstacle seriously and with a sense of responsibility. **You will appreciate more and more the clarity and brilliance of the One who loves you, chooses you and always cares for you!**

From the pedagogical wisdom of Don Bosco condensed into one of his most famous dreams and stimulated by the contagious enthusiasm of Pope Francis and the recent experience of the WYD in Rio, this is easily a profound booklet for those intending to take a few steps along the path to holiness and personal growth.

It is presented as a handy text, of ten steps, the ten diamonds, which will help youngsters to review their life within themselves, with God and with others.

A true spiritual journey designed with today's youngsters in mind.

