**JUBILEE REFLECTION SHEETS**

**REFLECTION SHEET ONE**

**Introduction**

In a letter, written while he was still Rector Major of the Salesian Family, Cardinal Angel Fernandes, presented a simple outline of the Strenna for the 2025: ***“Anchored in hope, pilgrims with young people”***. He also explained the reasoning behind the choice of the theme for the 2025 Strenna:

*When Fr Stefano Martoglio, my Vicar, and I gave thought to the Strenna for 2025, we immediately agreed on one point: the theme should be in tune with the great ecclesial event of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025 which the Holy Father Francis announced with his Bull,* ***Spes Non Confundit, [Hope does not disappoint]*.**

It was while the Christian faithful were celebrating the feast of the Ascension earlier this year, that Pope Francis announced that the year 2025 would be a *“Year of Jubilee*” in accordance with an ancient tradition that every twenty-five years the Pope proclaims a *“Year of Jubilee”.* Pope Francis made clear in *Spes Non Confundit* that “***Hope is the central message of the coming Jubilee”***, and he added:

*My thoughts turn to all those “****pilgrims of hope”*** *who will travel to Rome in order to experience the Holy Year and to all those others who, though unable to visit Rome, will celebrate it in their local Churches.*

It is Pope Francis’ wish that all of us become “***pilgrims of hope”.***

*Through our witness,* ***may hope spread to all those who anxiously seek it.*** *May the way we live our lives say to them in so many words: “Hope in the Lord! Hold firm, take heart and hope in the Lord!” (Ps 27:14).*

**Don Calosso, “a pilgrim of hope”**

At the beginning of November 1829, the fourteen-year-old **John Bosco**, was someone *“anxiously seeking hope”.* He had just returned to his family home in Becchi after an 18-month stay at the Moglia family farm near the village of Moncucco, some ten miles distance from Becchi. It was an absence made necessary by the earlier breakdown of the relationship between John and his older half-brother, Anthony. During his time of exile with the Moglia family John had had no opportunity to continuing his schooling. It seemed his dream of becoming a priest would never be achieved, but then **Don Calosso** unexpectedly entered John’s life.

John’s return to Becchi coincided with a mission being preached both in the nearby village of Buttigliera and throughout the Catholic world as part of an *“extraordinary jubilee”*, a *“jubilee”* called by the recently elected Pope Pius VIII to ask God’s blessing on his time as pope. After attending the first evening service of prayer and instruction in the parish church at Buttigliera, John was making his way back home to Becchi with a group of people, when a member of the group, an elderly priest, called **Don Calosso**, took particular notice*“a capless and curly-headed boy”*, and began chatting with him.

A few months earlier Don Calosso had become the chaplain at the little church of St Peter, in the hamlet of Morialdo, a mile or so from Becchi. Having discovered who John was, and that he wanted to study so that he could become a priest to help his companions, Don Calosso asked John what was making that impossible. When John explained that his brother, Anthony, was opposed to him studying, Don Calosso promised to do whatever he could to help John achieve his dream. And for the next 12 months, Fr Calosso, until his untimely death, became John’s teacher and his spiritual guide.

*I put myself completely into Fr Calosso's hands. […] I bared my soul to him. Every word, thought, and act I revealed to him promptly. This pleased him because it made it possible for him to have an influence on both my spiritual and temporal welfare. It was then that I came to realise what it was to have a regular spiritual director. a faithful friend of one's soul. I had not had one up till then. […] I made more progress in one day with the good priest than I would have made in a week at home.*

It’s no exaggeration to say that Don Calosso became for the young John Bosco, a “*pilgrim of hope*”, someone who brought the light of hope into a young life where previously there had been only darkness. No wonder that Don Bosco in his *Memoirs of the Oratory* declares Don Calosso to have been **“*my greatest benefactor”.***

**Reflection questions**

1. As I reflect on my own vocation journey, which individuals can identify as having been *“pilgrims of hope”* for me as Don Calosso was for the young John Bosco? Do I thank God for their presence in my life?
2. In his *Memoirs,* Don Bosco describes Don Calosso as *“old and bent”.* He was, in fact, sixty-nine years old, and his providential intervention in the young John Bosco’s life shows that age is no barrier to being a *“pilgrim of hope”*. As a Salesian, to whom, during this *“year of jubilee”*, am I being called to be a *“pilgrim of hope”*?

**Prayer**

Lord God,

we are your pilgrim people.

You accompany us every step of our journey.

May this ‘year of jubilee’ encourage us

to become ’pilgrims of hope’,

especially for the young and

for all those who are anxiously seeking hope.

Amen.

**JUBILEE REFLECTION SHEETS**

**REFLECTION SHEET TWO**

**Introduction**

During the evening of 24th December 2024, Pope Francis opened the Holy Door of St Peter’s Basilica in Rome, thereby inaugurating the widely-anticipated 2025 *Jubilee Year of Hope*. In a message published the same evening on the media site X, Pope Francis wrote:

*Tonight, the door of hope has opened wide to the world.* ***Tonight, God speaks to each of us and says; there is hope also for you!***

Some months earlier, in the document, *Spes Non Confundit,* announcing 2025 as the *Year of Jubilee,* Pope Francis encouraged all Christians to become ***“pilgrims of hope”***.

*We need to recognize the immense goodness present in our world, lest we be tempted to think ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence.* ***The signs of the times, which include the yearning of human hearts in need of God’s saving presence, ought to become signs of hope.***

Pope Francis next identified different contemporary situations into which the message of hope must be brought.

*The first sign of hope should be* ***the desire for peace in our world,*** *which once more finds itself immersed in the tragedy of war. Heedless of the horrors of the past, humanity is confronting yet another ordeal, as many peoples are prey to brutality and violence. What does the future hold for those peoples, who have already endured so much? […] Is it too much to dream that arms can fall silent and cease to rain down destruction and death?*

***May the Jubilee remind us that those who are peacemakers will be called “children of God”*** *(Mt 5:9). The need for peace challenges us all, and demands that concrete steps be taken.*

**Don Bosco: ‘pilgrim of hope’ and man of peace**.

Despite the great pressure put on him by liberal politicians and “*patriotic priests”* during the chaotic years of 1848 and 1849, when the army of the Kingdom of Sardinia was fighting against the superior military forces of the Austrian Empire, Don Bosco refused to allow the young people of his Oratories to engage in any kind of military drill or training. As a result, nearly all the diocesan priests who had previously helped in the Oratories abandoned Don Bosco, and for a short time the number of young people attending Mass and catechism classes at the Oratories each Sunday fell dramatically from more than 500 to less than fifty, and most of these were younger boys. But Don Bosco refused to compromise; he remained true to his principles, fully appreciating how important it was for his young people to grow up in as peaceful and serene an environment as possible.

Thirty years later, in the *Regulations of the Oratory of St Francis de Sale for Non-Residents* that he published in 1877, Don Bosco outlined the duties of different members of the Oratory staff. Apart from the usual roles of responsibility in an educational establishment, Don Bosco designated some member of staff as “***peacemakers”***. The *Regulations* describes their responsibilities:

*[1]* *The task of the* ***peacemakers*** *is to* ***prevent fights, altercations, swearing and any other kind of bad talk.***

*[2]* *When faults of this kind occur, [which thanks be to God are rare amongst us],* ***they [the peacemakers] should immediately warn the guilty one,*** *and patiently and charitably get him to see that faults of this kind are forbidden by the superiors, are contrary to a good upbringing, and what is more important, forbidden by God's holy law.”*

Commenting in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate,* on the beatitude, *“Blessed are the peacemakers”,* Pope Francis makes an observation with which Don Bosco would very much have agreed:

***It is not easy to “make” this evangelical peace,*** *which excludes no one but embraces even those who are a bit odd, troublesome or difficult, demanding, different, beaten down by life or simply uninterested.* ***It is hard work;*** *it calls for great openness of mind and heart, since it is not about creating “a consensus on paper or a transient peace for a contented minority”, or a project “by a few for the few”. Nor can it attempt to ignore or disregard conflict; instead,* ***it must “face conflict head on, resolve it and make it a link in the chain of a new process”.*** *We need to be artisans of peace, for building peace is a craft that demands serenity, creativity, sensitivity and skill. Sowing peace all around us; that is holiness.*

**Reflection questions**

1. Before I can become a *‘peacemaker’,* I need to be at peace with myself. Do I make regular use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and spiritual direction to achieve this interior peace?
2. What practical steps can I take to ensure that a spirit of peace and acceptance reigns in the communities of which I am a member?

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father,

your Son, Jesus, instructed his disciples

to say, whenever they entered a house

on their missionary journeys, *‘Peace to this house.’*

May we be empowered to share this ‘heavenly peace’,

which is the gift of your Spirit,

with all those with whom we live and work.

Amen.

**JUBILEE REFLECTION SHEETS**

**REFLECTION SHEET THREE**

**Introduction**

In *Spes Non Confundit,* the Bull of Indiction announcing the *Year of Jubilee,* Pope Francis, after focusing on a couple of contemporary situations into which Christians urgently need to bring hope, directs his attention to groups of individuals to whom **“*during the Holy Year, we [as pilgrims of hope] are called to be tangible signs of hope”****.*

One of these groups are **those who are sick.** Pope Francis writes:

*Signs of hope should also be shown to the sick, at home or in hospital.* ***Their sufferings can be allayed by the closeness and affection of those who visit them.*** *Works of mercy are also works of hope that give rise to immense gratitude.*

**Don Bosco, “pilgrim of hope” for the sick and infirm**

During his three years of post-ordination studies at the *Convitto Ecclesiastico* in Turin, Don Bosco’s spiritual director, **St Joseph Cafasso**, encouraged him to try a variety of different pastoral apostolates. One of the places which Don Bosco visited on a regular basis was the *Little House of Divine Providence,* a hospital and home for the chronically sick and severely disabled, founded by a close contemporary of Don Bosco, **St Joseph Benedict Cottolengo**, and situated in the Valdocco district of Turin, just a few hundred yards from where Don Bosco would later establish his first Oratory.

Don Bosco’s experience of ministering to the sick and the dying in the *Little House* was to prove invaluable when, with the growth of his work for youngsters in need, he began to provide boarding accommodation for those attending classes and workshops first, in the city of Turin, and later in the Oratory itself. Inevitably there were occasions when some of the youngsters fell ill. The *Biographical Memoirs* describe how Don Bosco responded to these situations:

*During the early years of the Oratory, whenever a boy had a fever or was afflicted with a toothache, a headache, or other ailment, Don Bosco would visit the Blessed Sacrament and plead with Our Lord to relieve the poor boy of his pain by transferring it to him. These prayers were answered. To a lad in pain, he would say:* ***"Come now, don't worry. I'll take on some of it."*** *He would laugh as he said this, but soon afterward he would get a splitting headache, earache, or toothache and the suffering boy would be instantly relieved. […]*

*A few years later, however, Don Bosco realized that this practice prevented him from attending to his duties. Since his presence was indispensable for the proper handling of important matters and the smooth running of the Oratory, he resolved to pray no longer for such a purpose. […]*

*But, notwithstanding his numerous duties,* ***Don Bosco never failed to visit his young patients.*** *He would do so immediately if the case was serious, sending for a doctor and taking him to the bedside personally. Don Bosco was so concerned about them that if at times he was unable to visit them, he would repeatedly inquire after their health, ask if medication had been provided, and reiterate his order that no expense be spared to restore them to health. He used to say: "****Let's be thrifty in other things, but the sick must be given everything they need."*** *If a boy's condition took a turn for the worse, he would spend hours at his bedside during the day and, if necessary, at night as well. Above all, he made sure that in serious cases the boy received the Last Sacraments with the proper disposition.*

And what Don Bosco did for his boarders and young clerics when they were sick and unwell at the Oratory, he encouraged these same young people to do for the victims of the deadly outbreak of cholera in the city of Turin during the summer of 1854.

*Don Bosco then added that the mayor had issued an appeal for nurses and aides and that he himself and several others had already responded. He concluded his talk by expressing the hope that some of the boys would also volunteer for this work of mercy. His invitation did not fall on deaf ears.* ***The Oratory boys listened with religious devotion and then proved themselves to be worthy sons of their father. Fourteen volunteered at once; a few days later another thirty enlisted in the cause.*** *It must be remembered that in those days fear had so gripped the populace that many, including doctors, were fleeing the city; even relatives were abandoning their own kin. In view of this and the instinctive repugnance felt by the young for sickness and death,* ***one cannot help admiring this unselfish* *gesture of Don Bosco's boys. He himself was so overjoyed that he wept.***

**Reflection questions**

1. Do I remember to thank God for the gift of the good health that I enjoy? Do I take the necessary steps, such as regular exercise and a balanced diet, to ensure that I keep fit and well? How patiently do I accept the colds and other episodes of ill-health that are part and parcel of everyone’s life?
2. How attentive am I in enquiring after the health of those in my Community who are unwell, and how generous am I in spending time with those who are sick and indisposed, either at home or in hospital?

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus, may we always be grateful

for the good health we enjoy.

May your healing touch restore good health

to those who are sick and unwell.

Amen

**JUBILEE REFLECTION SHEETS**

**REFLECTION SHEET FOUR**

**Introduction**

In the papal bull, *Spes Non Confundit*, announcing the *Year of Jubilee*, Pope Francis identifies another group to whom hope must be given. These are**migrants** *“who leave their homelands behind in search of a better life for themselves and for their families”.* Pope Francis makes it very clear that:

*“Their expectations must not be frustrated by prejudice and rejection.* ***A spirit of welcome,*** *which embraces everyone with respect for his or her dignity, should be accompanied by a sense of responsibility, lest anyone be denied the right to a dignified existence.”*

**Don Bosco, “a pilgrim of hope” and host to young migrants**

When Don Bosco began his work in the early 1840’s, many of the boys and young adults he welcomed to his Oratory and to whom he gave spiritual and moral support and the opportunity of an education, were **migrants** who flocked into Turin from the countryside around the capital and from even further afield, looking for work and a better life.

In the course of the conversation that Don Bosco had with **Archbishop Fransoni** of Turin in 1845, he explained why he was gathering an increasing number of young people around him to celebrate Sunday Mass for them and to instruct them in the truths of their Catholic faith.

*For the most part,* ***these youngsters are foreigners*** *who spend only a part of the year in Turin. They don't have any idea what parishes they belong to. Many of them are badly off, speaking dialects hard to understand, so that they understand little and are little understood by others. Some are already grown up and don't like associating in classes with little boys.*

The Archbishop understood, and replied: *"That means they need a place of their own, adapted to their own needs. Go ahead, therefore. I bless you and your project. If I can be of service to you, come by all means, and I will always help in any way I can*." The work of the Oratory continued to grow and develop; no needy youngster was ever turned away.

Some 25 years later, one of the great Catholic missionaries of the 19th century, **Archbishop [Charles] Lavigerie,** the founder of the Missionaries of Africaand a great admirer of Don Bosco’s work,wrote toDon Bosco to ask if he would accept at the Oratory in Valdocco a few of the hundreds of Arab children, orphaned as result of a terrible famine in Algeria. Don Bosco willingly agreed, and the Archbishop sent him two twelve-year-olds, **Ali** and **Caruby**, who were not yet unbaptized. Volume IX of the *Biographical Memoirs* includes this account of the last part of the boys’ journey to Valdocco.

*Landing at Genoa on October 7, they were taken to the railroad station and entrusted to the train conductor. On reaching Turin, they were left on their own but managed to find their way. Dressed in their native flowing white mantle and red fez with a blue tassel, and undaunted by the language barrier, they asked directions with the only two words they knew: "Don Bosco!" Sign language showed them the most direct route to the Oratory. By repeating "Don Bosco" at every street corner, they finally reached their destination. Don Bosco was just finishing his meal when the two youngsters arrived.* ***Taking them kindly by the hand, with smiles, a gentle pat, and a few words in French******he sought to make them understand that they were welcome and that he would be their friend.*** *He then entrusted them to a young cleric who knew a little Arabic from having been in Palestine.*

Don Bosco’s decision to accept Ali and Caruby is a reminder to us, too, to be ready to welcome the stranger. But Don Bosco not only offered the two boys a place of shelter and the chance of a good education, he also ensured that they were instructed in the truths of the Catholic faith. The *Biographical Memoirs* record that:

***On Christmas Day the two young Algerian boys [who had arrived at the Oratory in October] received Baptism.*** *Educating them and instructing them in the Christian faith had not been easy, as it also would not be with other Algerians who came [to the Oratory] the next year. […] Dressed in Arab garb, they were baptized in the Church of Mary, Help of Christians amid the deep emotion of the crowd who attended.* ***Ali took the name of Stephen; Caruby took that of Peter.***

**Reflection questions**

1. In my journey as a Salesian, have I ever felt myself to be a ‘stranger’, or an ‘outsider’? How did I cope in this situation, and what wisdom did I learn from the experience to share with others?
2. Who are the ‘strangers’ that I and the community to which I belong are being asked to welcome into our lives and our home?

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus,

you and your parents, Mary and Joseph,

experienced the pain of rejection,

when ‘there was no room for you at the inn’

on your arrival in Bethlehem.

Help us always to be open to the needs

of the ‘strangers’ we meet on our journey,

and as individuals and a community,

may we be generous

in sharing what we have with them.

Amen.

**JUBILEE REFLECTION SHEETS**

**REFLECTION SHEET FIVE**

**Introduction**

Another group whom Pope Francis identifies in the document, *Spes Non Confundit,* as being in need of special attention are **the elderly**. He writes:

***The elderly,******who frequently feel lonely and abandoned, also deserve signs of hope.*** *Esteem for the treasure that they are, their life experiences, their accumulated wisdom and the contribution that they can still make, is incumbent on the Christian community and civil society, which are called to cooperate in strengthening the covenant between generations.*

*Here I would also mention* ***grandparents****, who represent the passing on of faith and wisdom to the younger generation. May they find support in the gratitude of their children and the love of their grandchildren, who discover in them their roots and a source of understanding and encouragement.*

**Don Bosco, “a pilgrim of hope” for the elderly**

In the early chapters of the *Memoirs of the Oratory* Don Bosco makes reference to two of his grandparents: his father’s mother, **Grandmother Margaret Zucca**, and his mother’s father, **Grandfather Melchior Occhiena**.

We can presume that the young John Bosco had a warm relationship with these two grandparents. Describing the family situation before his father’s untimely death at the age of 33 years, Don Bosco recalled that, “*My good father, [Francis] almost entirely by the sweat of his brow, supported* ***my grandmother, in her seventies and prey to frequent illnesses****; three youngsters and a pair of farm helpers.”* Some eight years later*,* when John shared the details of his boyhood dream with his family, it was Grandmother Zucca, who “*though she could not read or write, knew enough theology, [and] made the final judgement, saying,* ***‘Pay no attention to dreams.’****”*

Grandmother Zucca died in February 1826. Without her calming presence, the dysfunctional relationship between John and his older half-brother, Anthony, deteriorated until Mama Margaret had no option but to send John to stay with the Moglia family at their farm near Moncucco, a time of painful exile for John that lasted eighteen long months.

It was just a few days after his return from the Moglia farm to Becchi in November 1829 that John, now 14 years of age, met the elderly **Don Calosso** who for the next twelve months was to befriend John and become his spiritual guide and teacher:

*No one can imagine how supremely happy I was. I idolised Fr Calosso, loved him as if he were my father, prayed for him, and tried to help him in every way I could.*

***My greatest pleasure was to work for him. I would have died for him.***

The tragic death of Don Calosso had a profound effect on John, as he recalls: “*Fr Calosso's death was a great loss to me. […] It affected me so badly that my mother feared for my health.* ***She sent me for a while to my grandfather [Melchior Occhiena]*** *in Capriglio.* We can presume that it was John’s time with his elderly grandfather that helped him slowly come to terms with the great loss he had suffered, and to understand better the transitory nature of all human life.

Just a few months before Don Bosco’s death, a young Salesian cleric, named **Ludwick Costa**, was invited to join Don Bosco and the Salesian superiors for supper in the Mother House in Valdocco as a reward for his success in his studies. Initially everything went well, but as the meal came to an end, one by one the priest Salesians who had dined with Don Bosco, hurriedly wished him *‘goodnight’* and left the dining room until eventually Don Bosco was left sitting at the table alone. He no longer had the strength to be personally present with his youngsters during the evening recreation. Sensing Don Bosco’s isolation, Ludwig went to sit next to him. He looked at Ludwick affectionately and then explained: ‘*You see, Ludwick, once I was the sole master: everything depended on me. It was a time of ceaseless activity. Now it is they, my Salesians, who do everything. At times, they make mistakes and I try to help them, but they are mature and they will do well.’*

It is easy to forget that in his late 60’s and early 70’s, Don Bosco faced the challenges of growing old, of letting go, of no longer being in charge. Don Bosco did so with dignity. Like the young Ludwick, we, as disciples of Don Bosco, should have a special sensitivity to the needs and concerns of the elderly.

**Reflection questions**

1. What memories do I have of my grandparents? What are the gifts they shared with me for which I will always be grateful?
2. In what ways can I as an individual, and as a member of a community, ensure that ‘*the life experiences and the accumulated wisdom’* of the elderly are treasured in the way that Pope Francis recommends?

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father,

may we always value the wisdom and insights

that each generation brings to our communities.

May we continue to grow in appreciation

for each one’s gifts and talents.

Amen