 Reading time: 4 min.

In this Jubilee year, in this difficult world, we are invited to stand up, restart, and walk in a new life on our journey as men and believers.

The prophet Isaiah addresses Jerusalem with these words: «Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you». (*Is* 60:1). The prophet's invitation—to rise because the light is coming—seems surprising, as it is proclaimed in the aftermath of the harsh exile and the numerous persecutions that the people have experienced.

This invitation resonates today for us who celebrate this Jubilee year. In this difficult world, we too are invited to stand up, restart, and walk in a new life on our journey as people and believers.

All the more now that we have had the grace, yes, because it is a matter of grace, to celebrate in liturgical remembrance the Holiness of John Bosco. Let us not make a habit of it: Don Bosco is a great man of God, brilliant and courageous, an unrelenting apostle because he is a disciple deeply in love with Christ. For us, a father!

In life, having a father is extremely important; in faith, in following Christ, it is the same: having a great father is an invaluable gift. You feel it within you, and his believing experience stirs your life. If this is true for Don Bosco, why can't it be so for me?

This is an existential question that sets us in motion and changes us, in the spirit of the Jubilee, becoming "renewed," "changed" people. It is the profound meaning of the feast of Don Bosco that we have just celebrated, for all of us: to imitate, not just admire!

In this Jubilee year that we are living, with the theme of Hope, the presence of God, which accompanies us, Don Bosco is a clear and strong reference!

Speaking of Hope, Don Bosco writes, as I have taken up in this year's Strenna text:

«The Salesian» –Don Bosco said, and speaking of the Salesian, he speaks to each of us who reads – «is ready to suffer cold and heat, hunger and thirst, weariness and disdain whenever God's glory and the salvation of souls require it»; the inner support of this demanding ascetic ability is the thought of paradise as a reflection of the good conscience with which he works and lives. «In all we do, our duty, work, troubles or sufferings, we must never forget that […] the least thing done for his name's sake is not left forgotten; it is of faith that in his own good time

he will give us rich recompense. At the end of our lives as we stand before His judgement seat He will say, radiant with love: “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master (*Mt* 25:21) ».

«In your work and sorrow never forget we have a great reward stored up for us in heaven». And when our Father says that the Salesian exhausted by too much work represents a victory for the whole Congregation, it seems to suggest a dimension of fraternal communion in the reward, almost a community sense of paradise!

Stand up, Salesians! This is what Don Bosco asks of us.

«Rejoice! In saving others, you save yourself»

Don Bosco was one of the great figures of hope. There are many elements to demonstrate this. His Salesian spirit is permeated by the certainties and industriousness characteristic of this bold dynamism of the Holy Spirit.

Don Bosco was able to translate into his life the energy of hope on two fronts: the commitment to personal sanctification and the mission of salvation for others; or better — and here lies a central characteristic of his spirit—personal sanctification through the salvation of others. Let us remember the famous formula of the three steps: “Rejoice, in saving others, you save yourself.” It seems like a mnemonic game said so simply, like a pedagogical slogan, but it is profound and indicates how the two aspects of personal sanctification and the salvation of others are closely linked.

Monsignor Erik Varden states: «Here and now, hope manifests itself as a glimmer. That does not mean it is irrelevant. Hope has a blessed contagion that allows it to spread from heart to heart. Totalitarian powers always work to erase hope and induce despair. To educate oneself in hope is to practice freedom. In a poem, Péguy describes hope as the flame of the sanctuary lamp. This flame, he says, “is always a descending border, in the depths of night.” It enables us to see what is now, but also to foresee what could be. To hope is to stake one’s existence on the possibility of becoming. It is an art to be practiced assiduously in the fatalistic and deterministic atmosphere in which we live».

May God grant us the gift to live this Jubilee year in this way!

May we all walk this month with this vision that “shines in the darkness,” with Hope in our hearts, which is the presence of God.

I recommend that, this month, you pray for our Salesian Congregation, which will gather in General Chapter; and accompany us all with your prayer and your thoughts, so that we may be faithful, as Salesians, to what Don Bosco wanted.