 Reading time: 4 min.

Don Bosco's life had much suffering but he bore it all with heroic humility and patience. Instead, we would like to talk here about daily crosses, more the passing kind but no less heavy. These are thorns he encountered along the way at every turn, actually thorns that stung his upright conscience and sensitive heart, which could have discouraged anyone less patient than him. We will give just a few examples of annoyances of a mainly financial nature that he had to endure through the fault of others.
Writing a letter from Rome to Fr Michael Rua on 25 April 1876, he said among other things: "*How many things, how many carrozzini completed and still under way. They seem like fairy tales!*" The term "*carrozzini*" is a Piedmontese term Don Bosco employed to indicate the problems caused by others that brought him serious and unexpected burdens, of which he was not the cause but the victim.

Three significant cases
The owner of a steam pasta factory, a certain Luigi Succi from Turin, a man well known for his charitable works, one day asked Don Bosco to lend him his signature in a bank transaction to withdraw 40,000 lira. Since he was a rich man from whom he had received many benefits, Don Bosco gave in. But three days later Succi died, the promissory note expired and Don Bosco sent word to his heirs of their deceased's commitment.
Card. G. Cagliero: "We were at dinner when Fr Rua came in and told Don Bosco that the heirs neither knew nor wanted to know about promissory notes. I was sitting at Don Bosco's side. He was eating his soup and I saw that between one spoonful and another (note that it was the month of January and the refectory had no heating), drops of sweat were falling from his forehead onto his plate, but he showed no concern and did not interrupt his modest meal.
There was no way of making the heirs see reason, and Don Bosco had to pay for it. It was only after about ten years that he got almost the entire sum secured by his signature back.

Another work of charity also cost him dearly for the harassment it caused him. A certain Giuseppe Rua, from Turin, had invented a device with which to raise the monstrance above the tabernacle in church and then lower it back down onto the altar table, at the same time lowering and then raising the cross. This would have avoided the risks the priest ran when climbing up the ladder to carry out this function. That really seemed a simpler and safer means of exposing the Blessed

Sacrament. To encourage him Don Bosco sent the designs to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, recommending the initiative. But the Congregation did not approve the invention and did not even want to return the drawings, on the grounds that such was the practice in such cases. Finally, an exception was made for him to free him from more serious harassment. But Mr Rua, seeing the not inconsiderable loss of his industry, blamed Don Bosco for it, took him to court and demanded that the court oblige him to pay a large indemnity. Fortunately, the magistrate later turned out to be of a very different opinion. But in the meantime, during the long course of the litigation, Don Bosco's suffering was no small matter.

A third harassment originated from Don Bosco's charity. He had devised a special collection of funds in the winter of 1872-1873. That winter was particularly hard given the already serious public financial difficulties. In order to procure means of subsistence for his work in Valdocco, which at the time had about 800 young boarders, Don Bosco wrote a circular letter sent in a sealed envelope to potential contributors, inviting them to buy tickets of ten liras each as alms and raffling off a valuable reproduction of Raphael's Madonna di Foligno.


Crosses adorning the Pinardi chapel

The public authorities saw a violation of the law in this initiative. The law prohibited public lotteries so Don Bosco was sued. When questioned, he protested that the lottery was not gambling but consisted of a simple appeal to civic charity, accompanied by a small token of appreciation. The case dragged on for a long time and only ended in 1875 with the sentence of the Court of Appeal condemning "the priest Sir Don Giovanni Bosco" to a heavy fine for contravening the lottery law. Although there was no doubt that the end, he had set himself was praiseworthy, his good faith could not exempt him from the penalty, the material fact being sufficient

to establish the contravention also because “it could have gone well beyond the end he intended”!
This warning drove Don Bosco to a final attempt. He appealed to King Victor Emmanuel II, begging by virtue of a sovereign pardon in favour of his young men on whom the consequences of the sentence would fall. And the Sovereign graciously accepted, granting the pardon. The granting of the pardon fell at a time when Don Bosco was, among other things, fully immersed in expenses for his first expedition of Salesian missionaries to America. But in the meantime, how much trepidation!
Although Don Bosco, for the sake of peace, always tried to avoid litigation in court, he still had to endure it, only sometimes obtaining complete absolution. “*Summum jus summa iniuria*”, said Cicero, meaning that too much rigour in judging is often a great injustice.

The Saint’s advice
Don Bosco was so adverse to litigation and quarrels that he wrote in his Spiritual Testament:
“With outsiders it is necessary to tolerate a great deal, and even endure harm rather than come to arguments.
With the civil and ecclesiastical authorities put up with as much as you can honestly, but never end up in the secular court. Since in spite of sacrifices and all good will one must sometimes have to endure legal suits and disputes, I advise and recommend that the dispute be referred to one or two arbitrators with full powers, and that the dispute be referred to any opinion of theirs.
In this way consciences are saved and affairs which are ordinarily very long and costly and in which it is difficult to maintain peace and Christian charity are brought to an end.”