 Reading time: 4 min.

But who would believe it? Don Bosco's 'vision' was such that he… saw so many things!
An elderly priest, a former pupil at Valdocco, wrote in 1889: "What stood out most in Don Bosco was his gaze. It was gentle but penetrated to the depths of the heart, and one could hardly resist gazing at him. So, it can be said that his eye **attracted**, **terrified**, **arrived** on purpose. In my travels around the world, I have never met a person whose gaze was more impressive than his. Portraits and paintings do not generally represent this feature."
Another former pupil from the 1970s, Pietro Pons, reveals in his recollections: "Don Bosco had two eyes that pierced and penetrated the mind… He used to walk around talking and looking at everyone with those two eyes roving every which way, electrifying hearts with joy."
Salesian Fr Pietro Fracchia, a pupil of Don Bosco, recalled an encounter he had with the saint sitting at his desk. The young man dared to ask him why he wrote like that with his head down and turned to the right, as he wrote. Don Bosco, smiling, answered him: "The reason is this, you see! From this eye Don Bosco can no longer see, and from this other very little!" "You see very little? But then how is it that the other day in the courtyard, while I was far away from you, you looked at me as vividly, brightly, as penetrating as a ray of sunlight?" "Well…! You people immediately think and see who knows what…!"
And yet that's how it was. And the examples could be multiplied. With his scrutinising eye, Don Bosco penetrated and guessed everything in the youngsters: their character, intelligence, heart. Some of them purposely tried to escape his presence because they could not bear his gaze. Fr Dominic Belmonte assured us that he had personally witnessed this: "Many times Don Bosco looked at a young man in such a special way that his eyes said what his lips did not say at that moment, and made him understand what he wanted from him."
Often, he would follow a young man with his gaze in the courtyard, while he was conversing with others. Suddenly the young man's gaze would meet Don Bosco's and he would understand. He would approach him to ask what he wanted from him and Don Bosco would whisper it in his ear. Perhaps it was an invitation to confession.
One night a pupil could not get to sleep. He sighed, he bit the sheets, he cried. The classmate sleeping next to him, woken up by this agitation, asked him: "What's the matter? What's the matter with you?" "What's wrong with me? Last night Don Bosco looked at me!" "Oh, wonderful! That's nothing new. There's no need to

disturb the whole dormitory for that!” In the morning he told Don Bosco and Don Bosco replied: “Ask him what his conscience says!” One can imagine the rest.

More testimonies from Italy, Spain and France



Don Bosco at 71 – Sampierdarena, 16 March 1886

Fr Michele Molineris, in his *Vita episodica di don Bosco* published posthumously at Colle in 1974, gives another series of testimonies on Don Bosco’s gaze. We refer to

just three of them, also as a way of remembering this scholar of the Saint who, in addition to the rest, had a unique knowledge of the places and people of John Bosco's childhood. But let us come to the testimonies he collected.
Bishop Felice Guerra personally recalled the vividness of Don Bosco's gaze, declaring that it penetrated like a double-edged sword to the point of plumbing hearts and moving consciences. And yet "he could not see out of one eye and even the other was of little use to him!"
Fr John Ferrés, parish priest at Gerona in Spain, who saw Don Bosco in 1886, wrote that "he had very lively eyes, a penetrating gaze.... Looking at him I felt forced to look within and examine my soul."
Mr Accio Lupo, an usher for Minister Francesco Crispi, who had introduced Don Bosco to the statesman's office, remembered him as "**an emaciated priest... with penetrating eyes!**".

And finally, we recall impressions gathered from his travels in France. Cardinal John Cagliero reported the following fact he noticed personally when accompanying Don Bosco. After a conference held in Nice, Don Bosco left the presbytery of the church to go to the door, surrounded by the crowd that would not let him walk. A grim-looking individual stood motionless, watching him as if he were up to no good. Fr Cagliero, who was keeping an eye on him, uneasy about what might happen, saw the man approaching. Don Bosco addressed him: "What do you want?" "Me? Nothing!" "Yet you seem to have something to tell me!" "I have nothing to tell you" "Do you want to go to confession?" "Hear my confession? Not by a long shot!" "Then what are you doing here?" "I am here because ... I cannot leave!" "I understand ... Gentlemen, leave me alone for a moment", Don Bosco said to those around him. The neighbours drew back, Don Bosco whispered a few words in man's ear and he fell to his knees, and went to confession there in the middle of the church.
More curious was the event in Toulon, which happened during Don Bosco's trip to France in 1881.
After a conference in St Mary's parish church, Don Bosco, with a silver plate in his hand, went around the church begging. Don Bosco presented him with the plate a worker turned his face away, shrugging his shoulders rudely. Don Bosco gave him a loving look as he passed by and said: "God bless you!" The worker then put his hand in his pocket and placed a penny on the plate. Don Bosco, staring him in the face, said: "May God reward you." The other, making the gesture again, offered two pennies. And Don Bosco said: "May God reward you more and more!" The man,

hearing this, took out his purse and gave a franc. Don Bosco gave him a look filled with emotion and went off. But the man, as if drawn by some magical force, followed him through the church, went after him into the sacristy, followed him into the city and stayed behind him until he saw him disappear. The power of Don Bosco’s gaze!
Jesus said: “The eyes are like the lamp for the body; if your eyes are good you will be totally in the light.”
Don Bosco’s eyes were totally in the Light!