 Reading time: 8 min.

One of Don Bosco's most famous dreams was the one called the "Dream of the Ten Diamonds" which he had in September 1881. It is a warning dream that will never lose any of its value, so that the declaration Don Bosco made to his superiors will always be true: "The evils threatened will be prevented if we preach on the virtues and vices noted there." Fr Lemoyne tells us this in his Biographical Memoirs (XV, 182-184).

To lift up Don Bosco 's spirit lest it be crushed beneath such a load of both minor and serious vexations, God intervened now and then to strengthen him in the heartening assurance of the mission entrusted to him from on high. That September he had one of his most important dreams that showed him the Congregation's immediate future and its glorious achievements, along with the evils which threatened to destroy it if timely remedies were not applied. What he saw and heard impressed him so vividly that, not content with merely telling the dream, he put it down in writing as well. The original has been lost, but numerous copies have come to light, all of them in remarkable agreement.

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.
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 (Salesian Society in the year 1881), and on the ribbon were the words: *Qualis esse debet* (As it should 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; 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 fulfill 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 precis 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."*

A wide, rose-colored 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."

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 Profandis* [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 qualis esse periclitatur anno salutis 1900* [The Pious Salesian Society as it runs the risk of being in the year of salvation 1900]. 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, motheaten 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 Francesia, 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*!”

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 endeavor 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.

Memorandum. 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. Around 1890 there will be a great fear, around 1895 a great triumph. Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us.

Father Rua immediately saw to it that the august person's directive was followed-namely, that matters revealed in the dream should fonn the topics of sermons. He himself gave a series of talks to the Salesians at the Oratory commenting in detail on both parts of the dream. The dates mentioned by Don Bosco as years of triumph or defeat correspond in our Congregation to the onset of adolescence in human life a critical, precarious period setting in most cases the stage for the entire future. Certainly, the growth in both members and houses as well as the spread of our Congregation to several nations, both of which were experienced in the final decade of the last century, could doubtlessly lead to some deviation or other, which, if not promptly checked, might take us farther and farther from the right path. However, at Don Bosco 's death, Divine Providence gave us a successor whose enlightened mind and energetic spirit measured up to the demands of those critical years. Father Rua, whom we may well characterize as the personification of all that is beautiful and wholesome in the first part of the dream, was indeed the watchful sentry, the undaunted and unquestioned leader needed to shepherd and guide the young recruits along the rightful path.
The portent of the dream transcends time. Don Bosco sounded the alarm for the special period which was to follow his death, but the admonitions *qualis esse periclitatur* contain a **warning which will never lose any of its significance. Hence Don Bosco's words to the superiors will always be valid: "The evils threatened will be offset if we shall speak about the vices and virtues pointed out in the dream."**