

□ Reading time: 3 min.

*In the dream that Don Giovanni Bosco recounted to his young people on the evening of October 30, 1868, the courtyard of the Valdocco Oratory transformed into a somber theater of waiting. As dusk fell, two gravediggers burst in carrying a coffin, placed it in the center, opened it, and, guided by the moonlight, searched among the boys for someone with the sentence "Moreris" (You will die) on their forehead. "It's your turn," they pronounced, grabbing the chosen one as he pleaded for time to repent. The scene, charged with tension, dissolved into Don Bosco's warning: always be ready, confess, obtain the plenary indulgence of All Saints, because death comes unexpectedly. Don Gioachino Berto, who was present, left a faithful testimony of it. The dream, received with fear and faith, foreshadowed a real funeral a few months later.*

On October 30, after night prayers, he narrated a dream recorded by Father Joachim Berto:

I wanted all of you here tonight—students and artisans—because I have an important message for you. Picture to yourselves all the boys at play during a recreation period. As dusk lowers, games and shouts subside and the boys form groups or stroll about while waiting for the bell to summon them to study. Meanwhile it grows darker and it becomes hard to distinguish one boy from another except at close range. Suddenly two pallbearers, carrying a coffin on their shoulders, come into the playground, briskly walk to its center facing the prefect's office, and lay the coffin down on the ground. Then all of you form a circle around them and, gripped with fear, dare not to say a word. The pallbearers take the lid off the coffin.

At that moment the moon comes out and slowly moves in a circle around the dome of the new church. Around it goes once, twice, and a third time, but the last round is not completed. The moon remains poised over the church, threatening to fall upon it.

Meanwhile, in the moon's light, one of the pallbearers twice walks around the boys, closely searching each face until he spots one boy having the word *Moreris* [You shall die] on his forehead.

"It is your turn," he says, grabbing him and trying to force him into the coffin.

"I am still young," the boy screams. "I need more time to get ready and do good deeds."

"That's your problem," the pallbearer replies.

“But at least let me see my parents once more.”

“That’s not within my power to grant. Do you see that moon? It has just passed the halfway mark in its third round. As soon as it goes down, you shall have to come with me.”

Soon after, the moon sinks below the horizon. The pallbearer seizes the boy and forces him into the coffin, screws the lid on, and, aided by his companion, bears him off.

See this story as an allegory, a parable, or a dream, as you wish. But I have told you stories of this sort before, and they have come true. I once described a dream in which I saw a boy’s coffin set down here in the porticoes. That boy died. The pallbearers, contrary to instructions, carried the coffin through the playground, and then, with the excuse that they had forgotten something, laid it upon the spot where I had first seen it in my dream.

I don’t mind if inwardly you say, “It won’t be me,” and you keep having fun. But let each of you put his conscience in order, so that, after two and a half rotations of the moon—that is, two and a half months or so—the one who is to die may be ready. Remember that death comes like a thief in the night. Let us treasure this advice by celebrating the feast of All Saints properly. All may gain a plenary indulgence if they have gone to confession within the week. If you do gain it, you will be sinless before the Lord, just as you were after baptism. Since tomorrow is a fast day, practice some self-denial.

This prediction, believed by most of the pupils, was to be fulfilled toward the middle of January 1869. We add here a remark of Father Berto himself: “We were already so used to seeing such predictions fulfilled that we would have been astonished had one not come true. It would have been an exception to the rule. I can remember only one such case. A certain boy whose name began with ‘C’ fell seriously ill, but after receiving Holy Viaticum and Anointing of the Sick he recovered. He is now a priest.” Commenting on this, after confirming that this boy was among those marked for death, Don Bosco added: “The Lord chose to be merciful to him in response to prayers, perhaps also because he was not sufficiently well prepared.”

*(MB IT IX, 398-400 / MB EN IX, 184-186)*