 Reading time: 4 min.

The 9-year-old's dream presented in ten points, the genesis of a heavenly vocation, confirmed by the fruits it produced, presented at the 42nd Salesian Spirituality Days in Valdocco, Turin.

Two hundred years ago, a poor nine-year-old boy, with no future other than to be a farmer, had a dream. He told it in the morning to his mother, grandmother and siblings, who laughed it off. The grandmother concluded "Don't pay attention to dreams." Many years later, that boy, John Bosco, wrote: I agreed with my grandmother. However, I was unable to cast that dream out of my mind."

First: it is an imperious order
Fr Lemoyne, Don Bosco's first historian, summarises the dream as follows: "It seemed to him that he saw the Divine Saviour dressed in white, radiant with the most splendid light, in the act of leading an innumerable crowd of youngsters. Turning to him, he had said, 'Come here: put yourself at the head of these young people and lead them yourself.' 'But I am not capable', John replied. The Divine Saviour insisted imperiously until John placed himself at the head of that multitude of boys and began to lead them according to the command that had been given him. Like Jesus' 'Follow me'."

Second: it is the secret of joy
That dream came again and again. With an overwhelming charge of energy. It was a source of joyful security and inexhaustible strength for John Bosco. The source of his life.
At the diocesan process for Don Bosco's cause of beatification, Fr Rua, his first successor, testified, "I was told by Lucia Turco, a member of a family where D. Bosco often went to stay with her brothers, that one morning they saw him arrive more joyful than usual. Asked what was the cause, he replied that during the night he had had a dream, which had cheered him up."

Third: the answer
The question for everyone is, "Do you want an ordinary life or do you want to change the world?"
Viktor Frankl emphasises the difference between "meaning of life" and "meaning in life". The meaning of life is associated with questions such as Why am I here? What

is the meaning of it all? What is the meaning of life? Many people look for the answers in religion or in a noble mission for the greater good, such as fighting poverty or stopping global warming. It is often difficult to find the meaning of life; the struggle to grasp this concept can be exhausting, especially in times of difficulty, when we struggle even to make it through the day. On the other hand, it is much easier to find meaning in life: in the ordinary things we do as a matter of habit, in the present moment, in everyday activities at home or at work. It is precisely meaning in life that is the preferred means of experiencing spiritual well-being.

Fourth: a sign from on high
In the seminary, Don Bosco wrote a page of admirable humility as motivation for his vocation: “The dream at Morialdo always remained with me; indeed it had been renewed much more clearly on other occasions.” We can be sure: he had recognised the Lord and his Mother. Despite his modesty, he did not doubt at all that he had been visited by Heaven. Nor did he doubt that those visits were intended to reveal to him his future and that of his work. He said it himself: “The Salesian Congregation has not taken a step without being advised to do so by a supernatural deed. It has not reached the point of development in which it finds itself without a special command from the Lord.”

Fifth: continuous assistance
“I then heard from others that he asked: ‘How will I care for so many sheep? And so many lambs? Where will I find pastures to keep them?’ The Lady answered him: ‘Fear not, I will assist you, and then she disappeared.’”

Sixth: a Teacher
A mother.

Seventh: a mission
“Here is the field of your work” the Woman continued. “Make yourself humble, strong, and energetic: and what you will see happening to these animals in a moment is what you must do for my children.”

Eighth: a method
“You will have to win these friends of yours not by blows but by gentleness and love.”

Ninth: the recipients
“Glancing round, I realised that the youngsters had all apparently run away. A large number of goats, dogs, cats, bears and other animals had taken their place.”

Tenth: a Work
“Worn out, I wanted to sit down beside a nearby road, but the shepherdess invited me to continue the trip. After another short journey, I found myself in a large courtyard with porticoes all round. At one end was a church. I then realised that four-fifths of the animals had been changed into lambs and their number had greatly increased. Just then several shepherds came along to take care of the flock; but they stayed only a very short time and promptly went away. Then something wonderful happened. Many of the lambs were transformed into shepherds, who as they grew took care of the others. I wanted to be off because it seemd to me time to celebrate mass. ‘Look again,’ she said to me, and I looked again and saw a wondrously big church. Inside the church hung a white banner on which was written in huge letters: *Hic domus mea, inde gloria mea.”*
That is why, when we enter the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, we enter Don Bosco’s dream.

Don Bosco’s testament
The Pope himself asked Don Bosco to write the dream for his children. He began like this: “Now, what purpose can this chronicle serve? It will be a record to help people overcome problems that may come in the future by learning from the past; it will serve to make known how God himself has always been our guide; it will give my sons some entertainment to be able to read about their father’s adventures. Doubtless they will be read much more avidly when I have been called by God to render my account when I am no longer among them.”
This is why the Salesian Constitutions begin with an “act of faith”: “With a feeling of humble gratitude we believe that the Society of St Francis de Sales came into being not as a merely human venture, but by the initiative of God.”