 Reading time: 3 min.

The series of Don Bosco's 'dreams' begins with the one he had at the age of nine, around 1824. It is one of the most important, if not the most important, because it points to a mission entrusted by Providence that takes concrete form in a particular charism in the Church. Many others will follow, most of them collected in the Biographical Memoirs *and taken up in other publications dedicated to this subject. We propose to present the most relevant ones in several subsequent articles.*

When I was about nine years old I had a dream that left a profound impression on me for the rest of my life. I dreamed that I was near my home, in a very large playing field where a crowd of children were having fun. Some were laughing, others were playing and not a few were cursing. I was so shocked at their language that I jumped into their midst, swinging wildly and shouting at them to stop. At that moment a Man appeared, nobly attired, with a manly and imposing bearing. He was clad with a white flowing mantle and his face radiated such light that I could not look directly at him. He called me by my name and told me to place myself as leader over those boys, adding the words:
"You will have to win these friends of yours not with blows, but with gentleness and kindness. So begin right now to show them that sin is ugly and virtue beautiful."
Confused and afraid, I replied that I was only a boy and unable to talk to these youngsters about religion. At that moment the fighting, shouting and cursing stopped and the crowd of boys gathered about the Man who was now talking.
Almost unconsciously I asked:
"But how can you order me to do something that looks so impossible?"
"What seems so impossible you must achieve by being obedient and by acquiring knowledge."
"But where, how?"
"I will give you a Teacher, under whose guidance you will learn and without whose help all knowledge becomes foolishness."
"But who are you?"
"I am the Son of Her whom your mother has taught you to greet three times a day."
"My mother told me not to talk to people I don't know, unless she gives me permission. So, please tell me your name."
"Ask my mother."
"At that moment I saw beside him a Lady of majestic appearance, wearing a beautiful mantle glowing as if bedecked with stars. She saw my confusion mount; so

she beckoned me to her. Taking my hand with great kindness she said:
“Look!”
I did so. All the children had vanished. In their place I saw many animals: goats, dogs, cats, bears and a variety of others.
“This is your field, this is where you must work,” the Lady told me. “Make yourself humble, steadfast and strong. And what you will see happen to these animals you will have to do for my children.”
“I looked again; the wild animals had turned into as many lambs, gentle gamboling lambs, bleating a welcome for that Man and Lady. At this point of my dream I started to cry and begged the Lady to explain what it all meant because I was so utterly confused. She then placed her hand on my head and said: “In due time everything will be clear to you.”
After she had spoken these words, some noise awoke me; everything had vanished. I was completely bewildered. Somehow my hands still seemed to ache and my cheeks still stung because of all the fighting. Moreover, my conversation with that Man and Lady so disturbed my mind that I was unable to sleep any longer that night.
In the morning I could barely wait to tell about my dream. When my brothers heard it, they burst out laughing. I then told my mother and grandmother. Each one who heard it gave it a different interpretation. My brother Joseph said: “You’re going to become a shepherd and take care of goats, sheep and livestock.” My mother’s comment was: “Who knows? Maybe you will become a priest.” Dryly, Anthony muttered: “You might become the leader of a gang of robbers.” But my very religious, illiterate grandmother, had the last word: “You mustn’t pay any attention to dreams.”
I felt the same way about it, yet I could never get that dream out of my head. What I am about to relate may give some new insight to it. I never brought up the matter and my relatives gave no importance to it. But in 1858, when I went to Rome to confer with the Pope about the Salesian Congregation, Pius IX asked me to tell him everything that might have even only the slightest bearing on the supernatural. Then for the first time I told him the dream that I had when I was nine. The Pope ordered me to write it in detail for the encouragement of the members of the Congregation, for whose sake I had gone to Rome.
(*Memoirs of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales*. John Bosco; BM I, 95-96)