

Young people making the novena to the Nativity of Mary well (1868)

Don Bosco's dream of 2 September 1868

This is how Don Bosco spoke in the evening after prayers:

It's hard to understand, but whenever we begin a novena, some boys ask to leave the Oratory, and others must be dismissed. Take one youngster, for instance. He was the worst troublemaker of all, but various reasons kept us from expelling him. Would you believe it? Some mysterious force just drove him to leave on his own.

Now let us talk of something else. Imagine that you see me coming through the main entrance, walking up here and facing a majestic Lady who holds a ledger in Her hands. Without my saying a word, She hands it to me and says:

"Read!"

I take it and read the title, Novena of Mary's Nativity. Then I open the book and see in letters of gold, on the very first page, the names of a very few boys. The second page bears a somewhat longer list of boys' names in ordinary ink. All the other pages are blank.

Now, can anyone tell me what this means?

(He asked one boy and helped him with the answers.)

The ledger contains the names of the boys making the novena. Those very few boys listed in gold letters are those who are making it fervently. The rest are those who are making it with less fervour. What about all the other boys whose names are not even listed? How do you explain that? I believe that the long walks we had [during the past festivities] so distracted these boys that they can no longer

pull themselves together. What would Dominic Savio, Besucco, Magone, or Saccardi say if they were to come back now? "How the Oratory has changed!" they would exclaim.

To please Our Lady, therefore, let us receive the sacraments frequently and practice the nosegays which Father Francesia or I suggest every night. Let this be tomorrow's nosegay: "Do everything diligently."

(BM IX, 158)