 Reading time: 4 min.

This year, the XLIII Days of Salesian Spirituality will take place from January 16 to 19, as usual, in Valdocco. They represent, for the entire Salesian Family spread around the world, a precious opportunity for meeting, reflection, and spiritual renewal. Every year, in January, religious, laypeople, and young people gather to rediscover the roots of the Salesian charism, celebrating the figure and legacy of Saint John Bosco, founder of the Salesian Congregation and a great friend of the young. The goal is to promote a communal reflection on the values of faith, fraternity, and educational mission, according to the Salesian spirit, in a context of celebration and prayer.

Origin and meaning of the Days of Salesian Spirituality

The tradition of the Days of Salesian Spirituality has its roots in the educational practice of Don Bosco, who understood the importance of cultivating moments of formation for his young people and for the collaborators who assisted him in his mission. From the early decades of the Congregation's life, there was a need to periodically gather to reread the experiences lived in Salesian works and to dialogue with the challenges of the present. Over the years, the Salesian charism has spread well beyond the borders of Piedmont, reaching all five continents. At the same time, the need to come together for common reflection and discernment has become increasingly pressing, making it essential to have an opportunity for meeting that we now know as the Days of Salesian Spirituality.

The Days, typically celebrated in January close to the liturgical feast of Saint John Bosco (January 31), represent the synthesis of an entire year of work, prayer, and reflection around the theme proposed by the Rector Major of the Salesians with the so-called Strenna. The Strenna is an annual message that, starting from a phrase or a key concept, aims to guide Salesian life and mission in the world. During these days, participants delve into the meaning of this message, engaging with other Salesian realities, sharing testimonies, and allowing themselves to be inspired by moments of prayer and celebration.

Structure and highlights

The Days of Salesian Spirituality usually take place in a location particularly significant for the Congregation, such as Colle Don Bosco or Valdocco in Turin, where Saint John Bosco took his first steps in youth apostolate. In other cases, to

facilitate the participation of the faithful and members of the Salesian Family residing in various parts of the world, parallel events or live streaming connections may be organized. This allows anyone interested, even from a distance, to follow the main moments of prayer, listen to meditations, and interact with the speakers.

During these days, the agenda is marked by a series of appointments that range from theological and pastoral reflection to moments of conviviality and celebration. Among the highlights are:

1. Conferences and thematic presentations: authoritative figures from the Salesian world, theologians, educators, and leaders of the works present insights on the annual theme. These presentations provide a broad overview of contemporary educational and pastoral challenges, helping to place the Salesian charism in today's context.

2. Group work and workshops: to move from the theoretical to the practical, participants are involved in working groups or workshops, where they have the opportunity to compare experiences lived in their own realities and to imagine new ways of evangelization and youth accompaniment.

3. Celebrations and moments of prayer: the Days of Salesian Spirituality are not only about study and deepening but also, and above all, an opportunity to meet God. The liturgies and community prayers that punctuate the entire duration of the event constitute a source of spiritual nourishment that supports and strengthens the sense of belonging to the great Salesian Family.

4. Testimonies and sharing of experiences: listening to the stories of missionaries, educators, and young people from different socio-cultural contexts is a fundamental element. These concrete testimonies give a face to Salesian values and demonstrate the vitality of a charism that, more than a century after Don Bosco's death, continues to inspire generations of believers.

5. Meeting with the Rector Major: a particularly awaited and significant moment is the meeting with the Rector Major, who represents the successor of Don Bosco. In his address, he urges the entire Salesian Family to continue with commitment the educational and pastoral work, reminding them of the importance of uniting spiritual life with concrete action in favor of young people, especially those in need.

The protagonists: the Salesian Family on the move
The Days of Salesian Spirituality involve not only Salesian religious (SDB) and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) but also bring together all the groups that make up the varied Salesian Family: Salesian Cooperators, former students of Don Bosco, Volunteers of Don Bosco, and many others. This plurality of expressions and belonging reveals the richness of a charism that has been able to take on different forms and sensitivities, but always converging in love for young people and for the Church.

Towards a continuous renewal of the charism
One of the most important messages that emerge from the Days of Salesian Spirituality is the need for a continuous and creative renewal of Don Bosco's charism. The world is changing at a dizzying pace, with unprecedented challenges concerning the technological, social, and educational spheres. To remain faithful to the founder and the Gospel, the Salesian Family is called to always be outgoing, not to settle for "tried and tested" formulas, but to experiment with forms of apostolate that can speak to today's youth.

Faithfulness to Don Bosco does not mean blindly repeating what has been done in the past, but deepening his spirit and preventive method, to find new languages and educational experiences suitable for the present. This is the profound meaning of the Days of Salesian Spirituality: a time of listening, reflection, and sharing that opens to the future, keeping a firm gaze on that original inspiration that has made the Salesian Congregation a point of reference for millions of young people around the world.

The Days of Salesian Spirituality, celebrated every year in January, are not just a fixed appointment on the Salesian calendar, but a true "spiritual laboratory" where the richness of a constantly evolving charism is felt. In an era where human relationships are often fragmented and the search for meaning is increasingly pressing, the Salesian message retains its relevance: to place the young at the center, to love them, to value them, to accompany them on the journey towards human and Christian maturity. And it is precisely in this perspective that the Days of Salesian Spirituality reveal themselves as a precious gift for the Salesian Family and for the entire Church, a sign that Don Bosco's educational passion still lives today, fruitful and full of hope, capable of generating good fruits in every corner of the planet.

To learn more, click HERE.