

St Francis de Sales university student in Padua (1/2)

Francis went to Padua, a city belonging to the Venetian Republic, in October 1588, accompanied by his younger brother Gallois, a twelve-year-old boy who would study with the Jesuits, and their faithful tutor, Fr Déage. At the end of the 16th century, the law faculty of the University of Padua enjoyed an extraordinary reputation, surpassing even that of the famous Studium in Bologna. When he delivered his Discourse of Thanksgiving following his promotion to doctor, Francis de Sales weaved its praises in dithyrambic form:

Up to that time, I had not dedicated any work to the holy and sacred science of law: but when, afterwards, I decided to commit myself to such a study, I had absolutely no need to look for where to turn or where to go; this college of Padua immediately attracted me by its celebrity and, under the most favourable auspices, in fact, at that time, it had doctors and readers such as it never had and never will have greater.

Whatever he may say, it is certain that the decision to study law did not come from him, but was imposed on him by his father. Other reasons might have played in Padua's favour, namely the need that the Senate of a bilingual state had for magistrates with a dual French and Italian culture.

In the homeland of humanism

Crossing the Alps for the first time, Francis de Sales set foot in the homeland of humanism. In Padua, he could not only admire the palaces and churches, especially the basilica of St Anthony, but also Giotto's frescoes, Donatello's bronzes, Mantegna's paintings and Titian's

frescoes. His stay in the Italian peninsula also allowed him to get to know several cities of art, in particular, Venice, Milan and Turin.

On a literary level, he could not fail to be in contact with some of the most famous productions. Did he have in his hand Dante Alighieris *Divine Comedy*, the poems of Petrarch, forerunner of humanism and first poet of his time, the novellas of Boccaccio, founder of Italian prose, Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, or Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*? His preference was for spiritual literature, in particular the thoughtful reading of Lorenzo Scupoli's *Spiritual Combat*. He acknowledged modestly, "I don't think I speak perfect Italian."

In Padua, Francis had the good fortune to meet a distinguished Jesuit in the person of Father Antonio Possevino. This "wandering humanist with an epic life" who had been charged by the pope with diplomatic missions in Sweden, Denmark, Russia, Poland and France, had taken up permanent residence in Padua shortly before Francis' arrival. He became his spiritual director and guide in his studies and knowledge of the world.

The University of Padua

Founded in 1222, the University of Padua was the oldest university in Italy after Bologna, of which it was an offshoot. It successfully taught not only law, regarded as the *scientia scientiarum*, but also theology, philosophy and medicine. The 1,500 or so students came from all over Europe and were not all Catholics, which sometimes led to worries and unrest.

Fights were frequent, sometimes bloody. One of the favourite dangerous games was the "Paduan hunt" Francis de Sales would one day tell a friend, Jean-Pierre Camus, "that a student, after striking a stranger, with his sword, took refuge with a woman he discovered was the mother of the young man he had just murdered." He himself, who did not go round without a sword, was one day involved in a fight by fellow

students, who considered his gentleness to be a form of cowardice.

Professors and students alike appreciated the proverbial *patavinam libertatem*, which in addition to being cultivated in intellectual pursuit, also incited a good number of students to “flutter about” by giving themselves up to the good life. Even the disciples closest to Francis were not models of virtue. The widow of one of them would later recount, in her picturesque language, how her future husband had staged a farce in bad taste with some accomplices, aimed at throwing Francis into the arms of a “miserable whore”.

The study of law

In obedience to his father, Francis devoted himself courageously to the study of civil law, to which he wanted to add that of ecclesiastical law, which would make him a future doctor of *utroque jure*. The study of law also involved the study of jurisprudence, which is “the science by means of which law is administered”.

The study focused on the sources of law, that is, ancient Roman law, collected and interpreted in the 6th century by the jurists of the Emperor Justinian. Throughout his life, he would remember the definition of justice, read at the beginning of the *Digesto*: “a perpetual, strong and constant will to render to everyone what belongs to him.”

Examining Francis’ notebooks, we can identify some of his reactions to certain laws. He is in full agreement with the title of the Code that opens the series of laws: *Of the Sovereign Trinity and the Catholic Faith*, and with the defence that immediately follows: *That no one should be allowed to discuss them in public*. “This title” he noted, “is precious, I would say sublime, and worthy of being read often against reformers, know-it-alls and politicians.”

Francis de Sales’ legal education rested on a foundation that seemed unquestionable at the time. For the Catholics of his time, “tolerating” Protestantism could take on no other meaning than that of being accomplices to error;

hence the need to fight it by all means, including those provided by the law in force. Under no circumstances was one to resign oneself to the presence of heresy, which appeared not only as an error on the level of faith, but also as a source of division and disturbance in Christianity. In the eagerness of his twenties, Francis de Sales shared this view.

But this eagerness also had free rein over those who favoured injustice and persecution, since, with regard to Title XXVI of Book III, he wrote: "As precious as gold and worthy of being written in capital letters is the ninth law which states: 'Let the relatives of the prince be punished with fire if they persecute the inhabitants of the provinces.'"

Later, Francis would appeal to the one he designated as "our Justinian" to denounce the slowness of justice on the part of the judge who "excuses himself by invoking a thousand reasons of custom, style, theory, practice and caution." In his lectures on ecclesiastical law, he studied the collection of laws that he would later use, in particular those of the medieval canonist Gratianus, *inter alia*, to demonstrate that the bishop of Rome is the "true successor of Saint Peter and head of the Church militant", and that religious men and women must be placed "under the obedience of the bishops."

Consulting the handwritten notes taken by Francis during his stay in Padua, one is struck by the extremely neat handwriting. He went from the Gothic script, still used in Paris, to the modern script of the humanists.

But in the end, his law studies must have bored him quite a bit. On a hot summer's day, faced with the coldness of the laws and their remoteness in time, he wrote, disillusioned: "Since these matters are old, it did not seem profitable to devote oneself to examining them in this steamy weather, which is too hot to comfortably deal with cold and chilling discussions."

Theological studies and intellectual crisis

While dedicated to the study of law, Francis continued to take a close interest in theology. According to his nephew, when he freshly arrived in Padua, "he set to work with all possible diligence, and placed on the lectern in his room the Summa of the Angelic Doctor, St Thomas, so that he could have it before his eyes every day and easily consult it to understand other books. He greatly enjoyed reading the books of St Bonaventure. He acquired a good knowledge of the Latin Fathers, especially the 'two brilliant luminaries of the Church', 'the great Saint Augustine' and Saint Jerome, who were also 'two great captains of the ancient Church', without forgetting the 'glorious Saint Ambrose' and Saint Gregory the Great. Among the Greek Fathers, he admired St John Chrysostom 'who, because of his sublime eloquence, was praised and called Golden Mouth'. He also frequently cited St Gregory of Nazianzus, St Basil, St Gregory of Nyssa, St Athanasius, Origen and others."

Consulting the fragments of notes that have come down to us, we learn that he also read the most important authors of his time, in particular, the great Spanish exegete and theologian Juan Maldonado, a Jesuit who had successfully established new methods in the study of the texts of Scripture and the Church Fathers. In addition to personal study, Francis was able to take theology courses at the university, where Fr Déage was preparing his doctorate, and benefit from the help and advice of Fr Possevino. It is also known that he often visited the Franciscans at the Basilica of St Anthony.

His reflection focused again on the problem of predestination and grace, to the point that he filled five notebooks. In reality, Francis found himself faced with a dilemma: to remain faithful to convictions that had always been his, or to stick to the classical positions of St Augustine and St Thomas, "the greatest and unrivalled doctor." Now he found it difficult to "sympathise" with such a discouraging doctrine of these two masters, or at least with the current interpretation, according to which men have no right to salvation, because it depends entirely on a free

decision by God.

By his adolescence, Francis had developed a more optimistic view of God's plan. His personal convictions were reinforced after the appearance in 1588 of the book by Spanish Jesuit Luis Molina, whose Latin title *Concordia* summed up the thesis well: *Concord of Free Will with the Gift of Grace*. In this work, predestination in the strict sense was replaced with a predestination that took into account man's merits, i.e. his good or bad deeds. In other words, Molina affirmed both God's sovereign action and the decisive role of the freedom he bestowed on man.

In 1606, the bishop of Geneva would have the honour of being consulted by the pope on the theological dispute between the Jesuit Molina and the Dominican Domingo Báñez on the same issue, for whom Molina's doctrine granted too much autonomy to human freedom, at the risk of jeopardising God's sovereignty.

The *Treatise on the Love of God*, which appeared in 1616, contains in Chapter 5 of Book III the thought of Francis de Sales, summarised in "fourteen lines", which, according to Jean-Pierre Camus, had cost him "the reading of one thousand two hundred pages of a large volume." With a commendable effort to be concise and exact, Francis affirmed both the divine liberality and generosity, and human freedom and responsibility in the act of writing this weighty sentence: "It is up to us to be his: for although it is a gift of God to belong to God, yet it is a gift that God never refuses to anyone, on the contrary, he offers it to all, to grant it to those who will willingly consent to receive it."

Making his own the ideas of the Jesuits, who in the eyes of many appeared to be innovators, and whom the Jansenists with Blaise Pascal would soon brand as bad theologians, too lax, Francis de Sales grafted his theology into the current of Christian humanism and opted for the "God of the human heart" Salesian theology, which rests on the goodness of God who wants all to be saved, would likewise present itself with a pressing invitation to the human person

to respond with the whole “heart” to the appeals of grace.

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Dream of the Ten Diamonds

One of Don Bosco's most famous dreams was the one called the “Dream of the Ten Diamonds” which he had in September 1881. It is a warning dream that will never lose any of its value, so that the declaration Don Bosco made to his superiors will always be true: “The evils threatened will be prevented if we preach on the virtues and vices noted there.” Fr Lemoyne tells us this in his Biographical Memoirs (XV, 182-184).

To lift up Don Bosco 's spirit lest it be crushed beneath such a load of both minor and serious vexations, God intervened now and then to strengthen him in the heartening assurance of the mission entrusted to him from on high. That September he had one of his most important dreams that showed him the Congregation's immediate future and its glorious achievements, along with the evils which threatened to destroy it if timely remedies were not applied. What he saw and heard impressed him so vividly that, not content with merely telling the dream, he put it down in writing as well. The original has been lost, but numerous copies have come to light, all of them in remarkable agreement.

Spiritus Sancti gratia, illuminet sensus et corda nostra. Amen. [May the grace of the Holy Spirit enlighten our minds and hearts, Amen].

A teaching for the Pious Salesian Society.

On September 10 of this year 1881, the day the Church

dedicates to the glorious name of Mary, the Salesians were assembled at San Benigno Canavese for their spiritual retreat. On the night of September 10-11, while I was asleep, I dreamed that I was in a richly adorned hall. I seemed to be strolling up and down its length with the directors of our houses when a man of majestic mien-so majestic that none of us could fix our gaze on him-appeared among us. Glancing at us in utter silence, he too started to pace the hall several steps from us. He was clad in a rich mantle or cape closed at the front of the neck with a scarf from which a ribbon hung down on his chest. The scarf was inscribed in luminous letters: *Pia Salesianorum Societas anno 1881* (Salesian Society in the year 1881), and on the ribbon were the words: *Qualis esse debet* (As it should be) . Ten diamonds of extraordinary size and brilliance adorning that august person kept our gaze from being fixed upon him. Three of the diamonds he wore on his chest: on one was written the word *Faith*, on another was written *Hope*, and the third over his heart bore the word *Charity*. The fourth diamond, affixed to his right shoulder, was inscribed *Work*; the fifth, on his left shoulder, read *Temperance*. The remaining five diamonds adorning the back of his cloak were set into a quadrangle; the largest and most brilliant sparkled in the very center, and on it was written *Obedience*. The diamond to its upper right read *Vow of Poverty*, and that below it, *Reward*. On the diamond to the upper left was written *Vow of Chastity*; its sparkle had a brilliance all its own and drew our gaze as a magnet attracts iron. Beneath it was a diamond inscribed *Fasting*. These four diamonds focused their dazzling rays upon the one in the center; their rays, resembling tongues of fire, flickered upward, forming various maxims.

The diamond *Faith* emitted rays with the words: "*Take up the shield of faith that you may fight against the devil's wiles.*" Another ray proclaimed: "*Faith without works is dead. Not the hearers but the doers of the law will possess the kingdom of God.*"

On the rays of *Hope* were the words: *"Hope is in the Lord, not in men. Let your hearts rest where true joys are found."*

The rays of *Charity* read: *"Bear one another's burdens if you want to fulfill My law. Love and you shall be loved. Love your souls and the souls of your charges. Recite the Divine Office devoutly, celebrate Mass attentively, visit the Holy of Holies with great love."*

On the word *Work*: *"The remedy for concupiscence, a powerful weapon against the devil's wiles."*

On *Temperance*: *"Remove the fuel and the fire will die out. Make a pact with your eyes, with your cravings, your sleeping, lest these enemies plunder your souls. Self-gratification and chastity cannot co-exist."*

On the rays of *Obedience*: *"The foundation of the whole edifice and a precis of sanctity."*

On the rays of *Poverty*: *"Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Riches are thorns. Poverty is not made of words but is in the hearts and deeds. Poverty will open the gates of heaven and enter it."*

On the rays of *Chastity*: *"All virtues come with it. The clean of heart will see God's mysteries and God Himself."*

On the rays of *Reward*: *"If the lavish rewards are delightful, do not be deterred by the many hardships. He who suffers with Me will rejoice with Me. For My friends, suffering is momentary, but heavenly happiness is everlasting."*

On the rays of *Fasting*: *"The most powerful weapon against the devil's snares. The safeguard of all virtues. By it devils of every sort are cast out."*

A wide, rose-colored ribbon formed the edge of the lower hem of the cloak and on it was written: *"Topic for Sermons, Morning, Noon and Night: Glean even bits of virtues and you*

will build a great edifice of sanctity for yourselves. Woe to you who despise small things; you shall fall little by little."

Up to this point the directors were either standing or kneeling, totally bewildered and silent. But then Father Rua, as though beside himself, exclaimed, "Let's make a note of this, lest we forget it." He sought a pen but found none. Pulling out his wallet, he rummaged through it in vain. "I will remember," Father Durando said. "I intend to write it down," Father Fagnano retorted and began writing with the stem of a rose. All were surprised and they found they could read the writing. When Father Fagnano was through, Father Costamagna dictated these words: "Charity understands all things, bears all things, overcomes all things. Let us preach this in word and deed."

As Father Fagnano was writing, the lights went out and we were left in total darkness. "Silence," Father Ghivarello said. "Let us kneel down and pray; the light will return." Father Lasagna intoned the *Veni Creator*, and then the *De Profandis* [ending with the invocation] *Maria, Auxilium Christianorum*.

As we all responded *Ora pro nobis*, a light shone, focusing on a poster which read: *Pia Salesianorum Societas qualis esse periclitatur anno salutis 1900* [The Pious Salesian Society as it runs the risk of being in the year of salvation 1900]. A moment later the light grew stronger, and we were able to see and

recognize each other.

At the heart of this glowing light, the same august person appeared again, but he looked very sad and on the verge of tears. His cape was faded, moth-eaten and threadbare. Where each diamond had previously been set, there was now a gaping hole made by moths and other insects. "*Look and understand*," the personage said. Then I saw that the ten diamonds had turned into as many moths ravenously eating through the cape.

In the place of *Faith* I now saw "*Sleep and sloth*."

In the place of *Hope*, "*Buffoonery and scurrility.*"

In the place of *Charity*, "*Negligence in the performance of spiritual duties. They love and seek what gratifies them, not what pertains to Christ.*"

In the place of *Temperance*, "*Gluttony.*" "*Their God is their belly.*"

In the place of *Work*, "*Sleep, theft and idleness.*"

In the place of *Obedience* there was only a gaping hole and no inscription.

In the place of *Chastity*, "*Concupiscence of the eyes and pride of life.*"

Poverty had been replaced by "*Comfort, clothes, drink and money.*"

In the place of *Reward*, "*The things of earth are what we seek.*"

Where *Fasting* had been, there was only a hole, no writing.

We were now all filled with fear. Father Lasagna fell into a faint. Father Cagliero turned as white as a sheet and, grasping a chair for support, cried out, "Can it be that things have already come to such a state?" Father Lazzero and Father Guidazio, frightened out of their wits, reached out to hold each other up. Father Francesia, Count Cays, Father Barberis and Father Leveratto fell to their knees, rosary in hand.

At that moment an ominous voice declared, "*How the beauty has faded!*"

Then, as we stood in semi-darkness, something strange occurred. Pitch darkness again swallowed us up and in its midst a most dazzling light arose in the form of a human body.

We could not fix our eyes on it, but we could make it out to be a handsome young man, clad in a white garment interwoven with gold and silver threads and entirely bordered by a string of brilliant diamonds. He moved toward us majestic in mien, yet gentle and friendly, and addressed us as follows:

Servants and instruments of Almighty God, listen and understand. Take heart and be strong. What you have seen and heard is a heavenly warning sent to you and to your confreres. Take it to heart and endeavor to understand it. An attack foreseen does less harm and can be warded off. Let each of the inscriptions be a topic of your talks. Preach unceasingly in season and out of season.

However, make sure that you always practice what you preach, so that your deeds may be a light, which may be passed on to your confreres from generation to generation as a solid tradition. Take heed and understand. Be cautious in accepting novices, strong in training them, prudent in admitting them [to vows]. Test all of them, but keep only the good; dismiss the lightminded and fickle. Take heed and understand. From morning to night ceaselessly meditate on the observance of the constitutions. If you do this, the hand of the Almighty will never fail you. You will be a model to the world and to angels, and your glory will be the glory of God. Those who will live to see the end of this century and the dawn of the next shall say of you: 'By the Lord was this accomplished, and it is wonderful in our eyes. Then all your confreres and all your sons shall sing: 'Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to Your name be the glory.'"

These last words were chanted, and the youth's voice was joined by a multitude of other voices, so melodiously blended and resonant that we were soon beside ourselves and, to keep from swooning away, chimed in the singing. As the song ended and the light dimmed, I awoke and realized that it was dawn.

Memorandum. The dream lasted almost the entire night, so that,

come morning, I was totally exhausted. Still, fearing that I might forget, I quickly arose and jotted down some notes, to serve me as a reminder in recalling all I have here written on this feast of Our Lady's Presentation in the Temple.

I could not possibly remember everything. But among other things, I was able to ascertain with certainty that the Lord is very merciful to me. Our Society is blessed by God, but He asks us also to do our share. The evils threatened will be warded off if we preach about the vices and virtues pointed out to us. If we practice what we preach, we shall be able to hand on to our confreres a practical tradition of what we have done and shall do.

I also managed to ascertain that many thorns and difficulties lie immediately ahead of us, but they will be followed by great consolations. Around 1890 there will be a great fear, around 1895 a great triumph. Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us.

Father Rua immediately saw to it that the august person's directive was followed-namely, that matters revealed in the dream should form the topics of sermons. He himself gave a series of talks to the Salesians at the Oratory commenting in detail on both parts of the dream. The dates mentioned by Don Bosco as years of triumph or defeat correspond in our Congregation to the onset of adolescence in human life a critical, precarious period setting in most cases the stage for the entire future. Certainly, the growth in both members and houses as well as the spread of our Congregation to several nations, both of which were experienced in the final decade of the last century, could doubtlessly lead to some deviation or other, which, if not promptly checked, might take us farther and farther from the right path. However, at Don Bosco's death, Divine Providence gave us a successor whose enlightened mind and energetic spirit measured up to the demands of those critical years. Father Rua, whom we may well characterize as the personification of all that is beautiful

and wholesome in the first part of the dream, was indeed the watchful sentry, the undaunted and unquestioned leader needed to shepherd and guide the young recruits along the rightful path.

The portent of the dream transcends time. Don Bosco sounded the alarm for the special period which was to follow his death, but the admonitions *qualis esse periclitatur* contain a **warning which will never lose any of its significance. Hence Don Bosco's words to the superiors will always be valid: "The evils threatened will be offset if we shall speak about the vices and virtues pointed out in the dream."**

St Joseph – a Father's Heart (video)

St Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus, is a not a well known saint, Little has been written about him because there are not too many testimonies about him. However, devotion to him has seen a steady increase in recent times, a sign of the powerful intercession that this hard-working and silent saint has with God.

Already from ancient times several Church Fathers showed a tender devotion to St Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus. In Italian he is called the *padre putativo di Gesù*. The Latin word "puto" means "I believe", i.e. he was the one "believed to be" his father (cf. Lk 3:23). Devotion to him is also found among other saints of the Church. The most famous expression is found in St Teresa of Jesus (of Ávila) when she says: "Until now I do not remember ever having asked him for a favour that he did not grant me. It fills me with awe to think of the extraordinary graces bestowed on me by God and the

dangers from which he has delivered me, both material and spiritual, through the intercession of this blessed saint. While it seems to other saints that the Lord has granted us succour in a single need, I have experienced that the glorious Saint Joseph comes to our aid in all of them. Therefore, the Lord wants us to understand that in the same way that he was subject to him on earth – where Saint Joseph, who was his father, having custody of him, could give him orders – also in heaven he does what he asks of him. Other people, to whom I used to tell them to entrust themselves to him, have found this to be true, and there are now many who have become devoted to him, because they have experienced this truth.” (Book of Life).

The spread of devotion to him saw steady progression. In 1726, his name was included in the Litany of the Saints. In 1833, the little office of St Joseph to be prayed on Wednesdays was approved. In 1844, the Saint’s name was included among the invocations in the prayers to be recited after Mass. In 1847 Pope Pius IX extended the feast of the Patronage of St Joseph to the whole Church, a celebration that was to be replaced in 1956 with that of St Joseph the Worker, assigned to 1 May. However, the one that would give him greater prominence would be the declaration of St Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, which took place on 8 December 1870 by Blessed Pope Pius IX with the decree *Quemadmodum Deus*. Thus began this decree:

“As almighty God appointed Joseph, son of the patriarch Jacob, over all the land of Egypt to save grain for the people, so when the fullness of time had come and He was about to send to earth His only-begotten Son, the Savior of the world, He chose another Joseph, of whom the first had been the type, and He made him the lord and chief of His household and possessions, the guardian of His choicest treasures.

Indeed, he had as his spouse the Immaculate Virgin Mary, of whom was born by the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ our Lord, who deigned to be reputed in the sight of men as the son of

Joseph, and was subject to him.

Him whom countless kings and prophets had desired to see, Joseph not only saw but conversed with, and embraced in paternal affection, and kissed. He most diligently reared Him whom the faithful were to receive as the bread that came down from heaven whereby they might obtain eternal life.

Because of this sublime dignity which God conferred on his most faithful servant, the Church has always most highly honored and praised blessed Joseph next to his spouse, the Virgin Mother of God, and has besought his intercession in times of trouble.”

On 15 August 1889, Pope Leo XIII wrote the Encyclical [*Quamquam Pluries*](#), in which he recommended devotion to Saint Joseph. With this Encyclical, the now classic prayer “To you, O Blessed Joseph” was also spread.

In 1909, the Holy See approved a litany in honour of Saint Joseph proposed to the whole Church, sanctioned by Pope Saint Pius X and published in the [*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*](#).

On 9 April 1919, Pope Benedict XV inserted a Preface proper to St Joseph into the Missal. Later, Pope John XXIII wanted to include the name of St Joseph in the Roman Canon. And on 1 May 2013, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments established the inclusion of the name of St Joseph in all the Eucharistic Prayers (II, III, IV) of the Roman Missal, through a [decree](#) approved by Pope Francis.

On 25 July 1920, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the proclamation of St Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, Pope Benedict XV issued a *motu proprio*, *Bonum Sane*, in which he confirmed the devotion to St Joseph.

Popes Pius IX and Pius XI dedicated the month of March to St Joseph.

On 7 March 1958, Pope Pius XII had a prayer to St

Joseph published in the [Acta Apostolicae Sedis](#) and enriched it with a partial indulgence. We present it below.

"O glorious Patriarch, Saint Joseph, humble and just artisan of Nazareth, thou hast given to all Christians and particularly to us an example of a perfect life through diligent labor and admirable union with Jesus and Mary.

Assist us in our daily work in order that we, Catholic artisans, may also see in it an effective means of glorifying God, of sanctifying ourselves, and of being a useful member in the society in which we live. These should be the highest ideals for all our actions.

O dearest Protector, obtain for us from the Lord humility and simplicity of heart, love for our work and kindness towards our fellow-laborers; conformity to God's will in the unavoidable trials of this life together with joy in bearing them; recognition of our specific social mission and a sense of responsibility; the spirit and discipline and prayer; docility and respectfulness towards superiors; the spirit of brotherhood towards our equals; charity and indulgence with our dependents.

Accompany us in times of prosperity when the opportunity is given for an honest enjoyment of the fruits of our labors; sustain us in our hours of sadness, when Heaven seems to be shut in our regard, and even the very tools with which our hands toil appear to rebel against us.

Grant that, in imitation of thee, we may keep our eyes fixed on our Mother, Mary, thy dearest Spouse, who as she spun silently in a corner of thy shop would let the sweetest smile course over her lips. Besides, may we never take our eyes off Jesus, Who was busily occupied with thee at the carpenters bench, in order that we in like manner may lead on earth a peaceful and a holy life, a prelude to the life of eternal happiness that awaits us in Heaven for ever and ever. Amen. "

On 19 March 1961, the Supreme Pontiff John XXIII asked for St Joseph's protection for the Second Vatican

Council in the Apostolic Charter “The Voices”.

On 15 August 1989, St John Paul II published the Apostolic Exhortation [*Redemptoris Custos*](#), on the occasion of the centenary of the proclamation of St Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church.

On the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception on 8 December 2021, the Holy Father Francis sent an Apostolic Letter, [*Patris Corde*](#), on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of St Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church and dedicated the year 2022 as the ‘Year of St Joseph’.

On 1 May 2021, in a [letter](#) addressed to the Presidents of the Bishops’ Conferences, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments requested the inclusion of new invocations in the [Litany in honour of St Joseph](#).

All these official interventions by the Church are in addition to many other devotions that have taken root among the Christian people, such as the practice of the Seven Sorrows and Joys of St Joseph, the Litany of St Joseph, the Girdle or Cord of St Joseph, the Chaplet of St Joseph, the Scapular of St Joseph, the Sacred Mantle in honour of St Joseph, the Nine Wednesdays, the Perpetual Novena, the Perpetual Crown, the Perpetual Court.

But not a word is preserved about St Joseph in the Gospels. Instead, we are reminded of his actions, his fidelity to God, from which the practice of the Seven Sorrows and Joys also derives: the acceptance of Mary as Mother of the Messiah (Mt. 1:18-25), the birth of Jesus (Lk. 2,4-7), the circumcision (Lk. 2,21), the presentation in the Temple (Lk. 2,22-33), the flight into Egypt (Mt. 2,13-15), the return to Galilee (Mt. 2,19-23) and the finding of Jesus in the Temple (Lk. 2,39-51).

This silence and this action of St Joseph remind us that

witness is borne first and foremost by works of faith, before words. And it reminds us that the Tradition of the Church is not only formed by words delivered in writing, but is first and foremost a living communication that comes from the Holy Spirit, who may or may not make use of written texts.

The intercession of St Joseph continues even today, most often in silence, as was also his life. A documentary film, called 'Father's Heart', launched in the year 2022 dedicated to him, comes to highlight this mediation with God. The director Andrés Garrigó, who searched various countries for traces of this saint's devotion, discovered that "... Joseph of Nazareth, the giant of silence, is more active than ever, attracting thousands of people every day and acting in their lives in an extraordinary way".

It is a film that presents historical and theological aspects, but above all the intercession of Saint Joseph in people's lives, even in those who are initially distrustful: conversions, failed marriages, assistance to the dying, etc. It turns out that Saint Joseph is not just a man who lived more than 2000 years ago or a figure from the crib, but a saint who acts in the lives of the people who invoke him, a saint who is worshipped all over the world.

The film is primarily aimed at a believing audience, but is suitable for all age groups, without restrictions.

Here is also the film's fact sheet.

Title: Father's Heart

Original title: Corazón de padre

Year of release: 2022

Cinema release: 18.03.2022

Running time: 91 min

Genre: Documentary

Suitable audience: Everyone

Country: Spain

Director: Andrés Garrigó

Main actors: Paco Pérez-Reus, María Gil
Screenplay: Josepmaria Anglés, Andrés Garrigó
Photography: Ismael Durán
Production company: Andrés Garrigó
Cinema distribution: [Goya Producciones](#)
Official website: <https://www.saintjosephthemovie.com/>
Rating: 7/10 (tens21)

Trailer:

What are the requirements for entering the Salesian Society

In various parts of the world the time is approaching when some young people, attracted by God's grace, are preparing to say their "Fiat" in the following of Christ, according to the charism that God has instituted through St John Bosco. What would be the dispositions with which they should approach joining the Salesian Society of St John Bosco? The saint himself tells us in a letter addressed to his sons (MB VIII, 828-830).

On Pentecost Sunday [1867] Don Bosco addressed a letter to all Salesians concerning the goal a candidate should have in mind when seeking admission to the Salesian Society. He also stated that the Society's definitive approval might not be long in coming. However, pertinent documents on hand give no such assurance. Since Don Bosco's personally written letter is dated "May 24, Feast of Mary, Help of Christians," we feel that it may have been this feast which inspired him to

write and perhaps gave him a more vivid vision of the future. Be that as it may, he had several copies of his letter made, and then he himself changed the date and addressed each respectively: To Father Bonetti and to My Dear Sons of St. Francis de Sales at Mirabello; To Father Lemoyne and to My Dear Sons of St. Francis de Sales at Lanzo. He also signed them himself and added the postscript: "Let the director read and explain as he judges necessary."

Here is the copy addressed to the Salesians at the Oratory:

"To Father Rua and to My Beloved Sons of St Francis de Sales in Turin.

Before long our Society may be definitively approved. I therefore feel the need frequently to communicate with you, my dear sons. Being unable at times to do so personally, I will try to reach you by letter.

First I shall treat of the general purpose of our Society, leaving the explanation of our rules to some other occasion.

The primary aim of our Society is the sanctification of its members. On entering it, therefore, everyone must discard any other intention and concern. It would be wrong to enter in order to enjoy a tranquil life, complete one's education, or free oneself of parental or other authority. This would hardly be a response to Christ's call. Such a person would be seeking temporal advantages, not his spiritual good. Our Savior praised the Apostles and promised them an eternal kingdom not because they had abandoned the world, but because they had abandoned it in order to follow Him through thick and thin; this they indeed did, wearing themselves out with work, penance, and suffering, and finally undergoing martyrdom.

It would also be wrong for anyone to enter or remain in this Society with the notion that he is necessary. **From the Superior General down to the last member, let everyone keep well in mind that nobody is necessary to the Society.** God

alone is its head, its absolute, necessary master. Its members must therefore turn to Him as to their head, true master and rewarder. Those who join this Society should work, obey, and abandon all worldly possessions exclusively for God's sake so that, at the end of their lives, they can tell their Savior, *"Behold, we have left all and followed You. What then shall we have?"* [Matt. 19:27]

By saying that **one should enter the Society only to serve God more perfectly and do good to himself**, we mean his true good, his spiritual eternal good. Anyone who seeks an easy, comfortable life in our Society is not rightly motivated. Our basic motive must stem from Our Lord's words that whoever wishes to be His disciple must sell his possessions, give to the poor, and then follow Him. But where can we follow Him, since He had nowhere to lay His weary head? He explains that we must follow Him in prayer, in penance, especially in self-denial, in accepting our daily crosses ... *"Let him deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow Me."* [Luke 9, 23] Till when? Till death and, if necessary, even till death on the cross.

This is what one does in our Society when he wears himself out in the sacred ministry, in teaching or in other priestly work till death, till even a violent death through imprisonment, exile, sword, fire, or water. Then, after having suffered and died with Jesus Christ on earth, he will join Him in the happiness of heaven.

This is how I understand Saint Paul's words to all Christians: *"Whoever wishes to rejoice with Christ must also suffer with Christ."*

After entering the Society with these good dispositions, a member must be undemanding and willing to accept any task-even the most menial- readily and cheerfully because what matters before God is not the task itself but the intention with which it is done. All jobs are equally noble because they are all

equally meritorious in God's sight.

My dear sons, trust your superiors. They shall have to give God a strict account of your actions. Hence they study your abilities and inclinations and use them in a manner compatible with your strength, but always in accordance with what seems best for God's greater glory and the good of souls.

If applicants enter our Society with these intentions, our houses will certainly be an earthly paradise. Peace and concord will reign, charity will guide superiors, and obedience and respect will anticipate their decisions, their undertakings, and even their wishes. Thus we shall have a family of brothers around a father, all united to promote God's glory on earth so as to be with Him some day and praise Him in the immense glory of the blessed in heaven.

May God abundantly bless you and your efforts. May He sanctify your activities and help you persevere in doing good.

Turin, 9 June 1867, Pentecost Day.

Affectionately yours in Jesus Christ,

Father John Bosco