

# Crown of the Seven Sorrows of Mary

*The publication "Crown of the Seven Sorrows of Mary" represents a cherished devotion that St. John Bosco instilled in his young followers. Following the structure of the "Way of the Cross," the seven sorrowful scenes are presented with brief reflections and prayers to guide towards a deeper participation in the sufferings of Mary and her Son. Rich in tender imagery and contrite spirituality, the text reflects the desire to unite with the Sorrowful Mother in redemptive compassion. The indulgences granted by various Popes attest to the pastoral value of this text—a small treasury of prayer and reflection to nurture love for the Mother of Sorrows.*

## **Preface**

The primary aim of this booklet is to facilitate remembrance and meditation of the bitterest Sorrows of the tender Heart of Mary, a devotion most pleasing to her, as she has often revealed to her devotees, and a most efficacious means for us to obtain her patronage.

To make this meditation easier, it is first practised with a chaplet indicating Mary's seven principal sorrows, which can then be meditated upon in seven distinct brief reflections, much like the *Way of the Cross*.

May the Lord accompany us with His heavenly grace and blessing so that the desired intention is achieved, so that each soul may be deeply moved by the frequent remembrance of Mary's sorrows for spiritual benefit and the greater glory of God.

## **Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary with Seven Brief Reflections Presented in the Form of the Way of the Cross**

### **Preparation**

Dearest brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, we undertake our

usual devotions by meditating devoutly on the bitterest sorrows that the Blessed Virgin Mary endured in the life and death of her beloved Son, our Divine Saviour. Let us imagine ourselves present at Jesus hanging on the Cross, as His afflicted Mother says to each of us, "Come and see if there is any sorrow like mine."

Trusting that this merciful Mother will grant us special protection as we meditate on her sorrows, let us invoke divine aid with the following prayers:

*Antiphon: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, and kindle in them the fire of Thy love.*

*Send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created,  
And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.  
Remember Thy Congregation,  
Which Thou hast possessed from the beginning.  
O Lord, hear my prayer,  
And let my cry come unto Thee.*

*Let us pray.*

*Enlighten our minds, we beseech Thee, O Lord, with the light of Thy brightness, that we may see what is to be done and have the strength to do what is right. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

### **First Sorrow: The Prophecy of Simeon**

The first sorrow was when the Blessed Virgin Mother of God presented her only Son in the Temple in the arms of the holy elder Simeon, who said to her, "This child shall be a sword that shall pierce thy soul," foretelling the Passion and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

*One Our Father and seven Hail Marys.*

### **Prayer`**

O sorrowful Virgin, by that sharp sword with which the holy elder Simeon foretold that thy soul would be pierced in the Passion and death of thy dear Jesus, I beseech thee to obtain

for me the grace always to remember thy wounded heart and the bitterest pains suffered by thy Son for my salvation. Amen.

### **Second Sorrow: The Flight into Egypt**

The second sorrow of the Blessed Virgin was when she had to flee to Egypt due to the persecution of cruel Herod, who wickedly sought to kill her beloved Son.

One *Our Father* and seven *Hail Marys*.

#### **Prayer**

O Mary, most sorrowful sea of tears, by the anguish thou didst endure fleeing to Egypt to protect thy Son from Herod's barbaric cruelty, I implore thee to be my guide, that through thee I may be freed from the persecutions of visible and invisible enemies of my soul. Amen.

### **Third Sorrow: The Loss of Jesus in the Temple**

The third sorrow of the Blessed Virgin was when, after being in Jerusalem with her spouse Joseph and her beloved Son Jesus the Saviour during Passover, she lost Him on the return to her humble home and mourned the loss of her only Beloved for three days.

One *Our Father* and seven *Hail Marys*.

#### **Prayer**

O disconsolate Mother, thou who sought thy Son anxiously for three days after losing His bodily presence, pray that sinners too may seek Him with acts of contrition and find Him. Amen.

### **Fourth Sorrow: Meeting Jesus Carrying the Cross**

The fourth sorrow of the Blessed Virgin was when she met her most sweet Son carrying a heavy Cross on His tender shoulders to Mount Calvary to be crucified for our salvation.

One *Our Father* and seven *Hail Marys*.

#### **Prayer**

O Virgin, more afflicted than any other, by the agony thou didst feel in thy heart upon meeting thy Son as He bore the wood of the Holy Cross to Calvary, grant that I may accompany

Him continually in thought, weep for my sins, the cause of His and thy torment, and grow in love for Him. Amen.

### **Fifth Sorrow: The Crucifixion of Jesus**

The fifth sorrow of the Blessed Virgin was when she saw her Son raised upon the hard wood of the Cross, shedding blood from every part of His Most Sacred Body.

One *Our Father* and seven *Hail Marys*.

#### **Prayer**

O Rose among thorns, by the bitter sorrow that pierced thy heart as thou beheld thy Son wounded and lifted on the Cross, grant that I may seek only Jesus

crucified, remembering always that my sins caused His suffering. Amen.

### **Sixth Sorrow: The Descent from the Cross**

The sixth sorrow of the Blessed Virgin was when her beloved Son, wounded in the side after His death and taken down from the Cross, was placed in thy most holy arms, so pitilessly slain.

One *Our Father* and seven *Hail Marys*.

#### **Prayer**

O afflicted Virgin, thou who received thy dead Son into thy arms, kissing His most sacred wounds and weeping a sea of tears, grant that I too may wash with tears of true contrition the mortal wounds my sins inflicted upon thee. Amen.

### **Seventh Sorrow: The Burial of Jesus**

The seventh sorrow of the Virgin Mary, our Lady and Advocate, was when she accompanied the Most Holy Body of her Son to the tomb.

One *Our Father* and seven *Hail Marys*.

#### **Prayer**

O Martyr of Martyrs, Mary, by the bitter torment thou didst suffer when, after burying thy Son, thou had to depart from

that beloved tomb, obtain for all sinners the grace to recognise the grave harm of being far from their God. Amen.

Three *Hail Marys* shall be recited in profound respect for the tears shed by the Blessed Virgin in all her sorrows, to implore through her a similar sorrow for our sins.

*Hail Mary*, etc.

After finishing the Chaplet, the Lament of the Blessed Virgin is recited—the hymn “*Stabat Mater*,” etc.

### **Hymn – Lament of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

The Supreme Pontiff Innocent XI, grants the indulgence of 100 days each time the *Stabat Mater* is recited. Benedict XIII granted the seven-year indulgence to those who recite the Crown of the Seven Sorrows of Mary. Many other indulgences were granted by other Popes especially to the Brothers and Sisters of the Company of the Sorrowful Mary.

### **The seven sorrows of Mary meditated in the form of the Way of the Cross**

Stabat Mater dolorosa  
 Iuxta crucem lacrymosa,  
 Dum pendebat Filius.  
 Cuius animam gementem  
 Contristatam et dolentem  
 Pertransiuit gladius.  
 O quam tristis et afflicta  
 Fuit illa benedicta  
 Mater unigeniti!  
 Quae moerebat, et dolebat,  
 Pia Mater dum videbat.  
 Nati poenas inclyti.  
 Quis est homo, qui non fleret,  
 Matrem Christi si videret  
 In tanto supplicio?  
 Quis non posset contristari,  
 Christi Matrem contemplari  
 Dolentem cum filio?  
 Pro peccatis suae gentis  
 Vidit Iesum in tormentis  
 Et flagellis subditum.  
 Vidit suum dulcem natura  
 Moriundo desolatum,  
 Dum emisit spiritum.  
 Eia mater fons amoris,  
 Me sentire vim doloris  
 Fac, ut tecum lugeam.  
 Fac ut ardeat cor meum  
 In amando Christum Deum,  
 Ut sibi complaceam.  
 Sancta Mater istud agas,  
 Crucifixi fige plagas  
 Cordi meo valide.  
 Tui nati vulnerati  
 Tam dignati pro me pati  
 Poenas mecum divide.  
 Fac me tecum pie flere,  
 Crucifixo condolere,  
 Donec ego vixero.  
 Iuxta Crucem tecum stare,  
 Et me tibi sociare  
 In planctu desidero.  
 Virgo virginum praeclara,  
 Mihi iam non sia amara,  
 Fac me tecum plangere.  
 Fac ut portem Christi mortem,  
 Passionis fac consortem,  
 Et plagas recolere.  
 Fac me plagis vulnerari,  
 Fac me cruce inebriari,  
 Et cruore Filii.  
 Flammis ne urar succensus,  
 Per te, Virgo, sim defensus  
 In die Iudicii.  
 Christe, cum sit hinc exire,  
 Da per matrem me venire  
 Ad palmam victoriae.  
 Quando corpus morietur,  
 Fac ut animae donetur  
 Paradisi gloria. Amen.

At the cross her station keeping,  
 Stood the mournful Mother weeping,  
 Close to Jesus to the last.  
 Through her heart, His sorrow sharing,  
 All His bitter anguish bearing,  
 Now at length the sword had passed.  
 Oh, how sad and sore distressed  
 Was that Mother highly blest,  
 Of the sole begotten One!  
 Christ above in torment hangs.  
 She beneath beholds the pangs  
 Of her dying glorious Son.  
 Is there one who would not weep,  
 Whelmed in miseries so deep,  
 Christ's dear Mother to behold?  
 Can the human heart refrain  
 From partaking in her pain,  
 In that Mother's pain untold?  
 Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled,  
 She beheld her tender Child,  
 All with bloody scourges rent.  
 For the sins of His own nation,  
 Saw Him hang in desolation  
 Till His spirit forth He sent.  
 O thou Mother, fount of love!  
 Touch my spirit from above,  
 Make my heart with thine accord.  
 Make me feel as thou hast felt;  
 Make my soul to glow and melt  
 With the love of Christ my Lord.  
 Holy Mother, pierce me through;  
 In my heart each wound renew  
 Of my Savior crucified.  
 Let me share with thee His pain,  
 Who for all my sins was slain,  
 Who for me in torment died.  
 Let me mingle tears with thee,  
 Mourning Him who mourned for me,  
 All the days that I may live.  
 By the Cross with thee to stay;  
 There with thee to weep and pray,  
 Is all I ask of thee to give.  
 Virgin of all virgins best,  
 Listen to my fond request:  
 Let me share thy grief divine.  
 Let me to my latest breath,  
 In my body bear the death  
 Of that dying Son of thine.  
 Wounded with His every wound,  
 Steep my soul till it hath swooned  
 In His very blood, away.  
 Be to me, O Virgin, nigh,  
 Lest in flames I burn and die,  
 In His awful Judgment day.  
 Christ, when Thou shalt call me hence,  
 Be Thy Mother my defence,  
 Be Thy Cross my victory.  
 While my body here decays,  
 May my soul Thy goodness praise,  
 Safe in Paradise with Thee. Amen.

**Invoke divine help by saying:**

*We beseech Thee, O Lord, to anticipate our actions by inspiring us, and to continue them by helping us, so that all our prayer and work may always begin with Thee, and, having begun through Thee, may be ended. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

**Act of Contrition**

Most Afflicted Virgin, alas! How ungrateful I have been in the past towards my God, with what ingratitude I have responded to His countless benefits! Now I repent, and in the bitterness of my heart and the weeping of my soul, I humbly ask Him for forgiveness for having offended His infinite goodness, firmly resolved in the future with heavenly grace, never to offend Him again. Ah! By all the sorrows you endured in the barbaric passion of your beloved Jesus, I beg you with the deepest sighs to obtain for me from Him, pity and mercy for my sins. Accept this holy exercise I am about to perform and receive it in union with those pains and sorrows you suffered for your son Jesus. Ah, grant me! Yes, grant me that those same swords that pierced your spirit may also pierce mine, and that I may live and die in the friendship of my Lord, to eternally partake of the glory He has acquired for me with His precious Blood. Amen.

**First Sorrow**

In this first sorrow, let us imagine ourselves in the temple of Jerusalem, where the Most Blessed Virgin heard the prophecy of the old Simeon.

**Meditation**

Ah! What anguish the heart of Mary must have felt upon hearing the sorrowful words with which the holy old Simeon foretold the bitter passion and atrocious death of her sweetest Jesus: while at that same moment there came to her mind the insults, abuses, and tortures that the wicked Jews would inflict on the Redeemer of the world. But do you know what was the most

piercing sword that wounded her in this circumstance? It was the consideration of the ingratitude with which her beloved Son would be repaid by men. Now reflecting that, because of your sins, you are miserably among these, ah! Throw yourself at the feet of this Sorrowful Mother and say to her weeping (all kneel): Ah! Most Compassionate Virgin, who experienced such bitter anguish in your spirit seeing the abuse which I, unworthy creature, would make of the blood of your beloved Son, grant, yes grant by your most afflicted Heart, that in the future I may respond to the Divine Mercies, make use of heavenly graces, and not receive in vain so many lights and inspirations which you will deign to obtain for me, so that I may be among those for whom the bitter passion of Jesus is an eternal salvation. Amen. *Hail Mary* etc. *Glory be* etc.

Mary, my sweet love,  
Imprint your sorrows in my heart.

## **Second Sorrow**

In this second sorrow, let us consider the most painful journey the Virgin made towards Egypt to save Jesus from Herod's cruel persecution.

## **Meditation**

Consider the bitter sorrow Mary must have felt when, at night, she had to set out on her journey by the Angel's order to preserve her Son from the massacre ordered by that fierce Prince. Ah! At every animal cry, at every gust of wind, at every rustle of leaves she heard in those deserted roads, she was filled with fear lest some harm befall the child Jesus she carried with her. Now she turned one way, now another, now hastened her steps, now hid herself, thinking she was overtaken by soldiers who might tear her most beloved Son from her arms and subject Him to barbaric treatment before her eyes. Fixing her tearful gaze upon her Jesus and pressing Him tightly to her breast, giving Him a thousand kisses, she sent forth the most anguished sighs from her heart. And here reflect how many times you have renewed this bitter sorrow for



Mary by forcing her Son with your grave sins to flee from your soul. Now that you know the great evil committed, turn repentantly to this merciful Mother and say to her:

Ah, sweetest Mother! Once Herod forced you and your Jesus to flee because of the inhuman persecution he commanded; but I, oh! How many times have I obliged my Redeemer, and consequently you too, to depart quickly from my heart, introducing into it the cursed sin, merciless enemy of you and my God. Ah! Full of sorrow and contrition, I humbly ask your forgiveness.

Yes, mercy, O dear Mother, mercy, and I promise in the future with Divine help to always keep my Saviour and You in full possession of my soul. Amen. *Hail Mary* etc. *Glory be* etc.

Mary, my sweet love,  
Imprint your sorrows in my heart.

### **Third Sorrow**

In this third sorrow, let us consider the most afflicted Virgin who, weeping, searches for her lost Jesus.

### **Meditation**

How great was Mary's sorrow when she realised, she had lost her beloved Son! And how her grief increased when, having diligently searched for Him among friends, relatives, and neighbours, she could find no trace of Him. Not minding discomfort, fatigue, or dangers, she wandered for three continuous days through the regions of Judea, repeating those words of desolation: Has anyone seen Him whom my soul truly loves? Ah! The great anxiety with which she sought Him made her imagine at every moment that she saw Him or heard His voice, but then, finding herself disappointed, oh how she shuddered and felt more keenly the grief of such a deplorable loss! Great confusion for you, O sinner, who, having so often lost your Jesus through grave faults, took no care to seek Him, a clear sign that you make little or no account of the precious treasure of Divine friendship. Weep, then, for your blindness, and turning to this Sorrowful Mother, say to her

sighing thus:

Most Afflicted Virgin, ah, make me learn from you the true way to seek Jesus whom I have lost by following my passions and the wicked suggestions of the devil, so that I may succeed in finding Him, and when I have regained possession of Him, I will continually repeat those words of yours, I have found Him whom my heart truly loves. I will keep Him always with me, and never let Him depart again. Amen. *Hail Mary* etc. *Glory be* etc.

Mary, my sweet love,  
Imprint your sorrows in my heart.

#### **Fourth Sorrow**

In the fourth sorrow, let us consider the meeting of the sorrowful Virgin with her suffering Son.

#### ***Meditation***

Come, then, O hardened hearts, and see if you can endure this most tearful spectacle. It is the most tender, most loving mother meeting her sweetest, most beloved Son; and how does she meet Him? O God! Amidst the most impious mob dragging Him cruelly to death, covered with wounds, dripping with blood, torn by injuries, with a crown of thorns on His head and a heavy beam on His shoulders, weary, gasping, languishing, seeming at every step about to breathe His last.

Ah! Consider, my soul, the mortal shock the Most Holy Virgin felt at the first glance she fixed upon her tormented Jesus. She would want to bid Him a last farewell, but how, when grief prevents her from uttering a word? She would throw herself at His neck, but remains motionless and petrified by the force of inner affliction. She would vent her grief with tears, but her heart feels so constricted and oppressed that she cannot shed a tear. Oh! And who can restrain tears seeing a poor mother plunged in such great anguish? But who is the cause of such bitter sorrow? Ah, I know, yes, it is I with my sins who have made such a barbaric wound in your tender heart, O Sorrowful

Virgin. Yet who would believe it? I remain unmoved, without being touched. But if I was ungrateful in the past, I shall be so no more.

Meanwhile, prostrate at your feet, O Most Holy Virgin, I humbly ask your forgiveness for so much sorrow I have caused you. I know and confess that I do not deserve pity, being the true reason you fell with grief upon meeting your Jesus all covered with wounds; but remember, yes remember that you are the mother of mercy. Ah, show yourself thus to me, and I promise in the future to be more faithful to my Redeemer, and so make up for so much displeasure I have given your most afflicted spirit. Amen. *Hail Mary* etc. *Glory be* etc.

Mary, my sweet love,  
Imprint your sorrows in my heart.

### **Fifth sorrow**

In this fifth sorrow, let us imagine ourselves on Mount Calvary where the most afflicted Virgin saw her beloved Son expire on the Cross.

### ***Meditation***

Here we are at Calvary where two altars of sacrifice are already raised, one in the body of Jesus, the other in the heart of Mary. Oh, tragic spectacle! We behold the Mother drowned in a sea of anguish as she sees her dear and beloved child torn from her by pitiless death. Alas! Every hammer blow, every wound, every laceration that the Savior receives upon His flesh deeply reverberates in the heart of the Virgin. She stands at the foot of the Cross so penetrated by sorrow and pierced by grief that you could not decide who would be the first to expire—Jesus or Mary. She fixes her eyes on the face of her agonizing Son, observes His languishing pupils, His pale face, His livid lips, His laboured breath, and finally realizes that He no longer lives and has already surrendered His spirit into the hands of His eternal Father. Ah, her soul then makes every possible effort to separate from her body and unite with that of Jesus. And who can endure such

a sight?

Oh, most sorrowful Mother, instead of withdrawing from Calvary to avoid feeling such acute anguish, you remain motionless there to drink to the last drop the bitter cup of your afflictions. What confusion this must bring to me, who seek every means to avoid the crosses and small sufferings that the Lord deigns to send for my good? Most sorrowful Virgin, I humble myself before you—ah! Grant that I may once clearly know the preciousness and great value of suffering, that I may become so attached to it that I never tire of exclaiming with St. Francis Xavier: “More, Lord, more, Lord—more suffering, my God.” Ah yes, more suffering, O my God. So be it. *Hail Mary*, etc. *Glory be*, etc.

Mary, my sweet beloved,  
Imprint your sorrows upon my heart.

### **Sixth sorrow**

In this sixth sorrow, let us imagine ourselves seeing the disconsolate but Virgin Mother receiving into her arms her deceased Son taken down from the Cross.

### ***Meditation***

Consider the most bitter pain that pierced Mary's soul when she saw the lifeless body of her beloved Jesus placed in her lap. Ah! As she fixed her gaze upon His wounds and sores, beholding Him crimson with His own blood, the force of her inner grief was such that her heart was mortally pierced, and had she not died, it was Divine omnipotence that preserved her life. Oh, poor Mother—yes, poor Mother, who leads to the tomb the dear object of your tenderest affections, who from a bouquet of roses has become a bundle of thorns due to the mistreatment and lacerations inflicted by wicked executioners. And who would not pity you? Who would not feel crushed by sorrow seeing you in such a state of affliction as to move even the hardest stone to pity? I see John inconsolable, Magdalene and the other Marys weeping bitterly, Nicodemus unable to bear the grief any longer. And I? I alone shed no

tear amid such sorrow! Ungrateful and thankless wretch that I am!

Ah! Most merciful Mother, here I am at your feet, receive me under your powerful protection and let my heart be pierced by the same sword that passed through your most afflicted spirit, that it may soften at last and truly weep for my grave sins, which brought you such cruel martyrdom. So be it. *Hail Mary*, etc. *Glory be*, etc.

Mary, my sweet beloved,  
Imprint your sorrows upon my heart.

### **Seventh sorrow**

In this seventh sorrow, let us consider the most sorrowful Virgin as she sees her deceased Son enclosed in the tomb.

### ***Meditation***

Consider the mortal sigh that escaped Mary's afflicted heart when she saw her beloved Jesus laid in the tomb! Oh, what pain, what grief her spirit felt when the stone was raised to seal that most sacred monument! It was impossible to detach her from the edge of the sepulchre, for her sorrow rendered her insensible and immobile, never ceasing to gaze upon those wounds and cruel lacerations. And when the tomb was finally sealed—ah, then the force of her inner anguish was such that she would undoubtedly have fallen dead had God not preserved her life. Oh, most tormented Mother! You will now depart from this place with His body, but surely your heart remains here, for here lies your true treasure. Ah, fate—may all our affection, all our love, remain with Him. How can we not be consumed with love for the Savior, who shed all His blood for our salvation? How can we not love you, who suffered so much for our sake?

Now, sorrowful and repentant for having caused so much pain to your Son and such bitterness to you, we prostrate ourselves at your feet. And for all those sorrows you allowed us to meditate upon, grant us this favour, that the memory of them may remain vividly impressed upon our minds, that our hearts

may be consumed with love for our good God and for you, our sweetest Mother, and that the last sigh of our life may be united to those you poured forth from the depths of your soul in the sorrowful Passion of Jesus, to whom be honour, glory, and thanksgiving for all ages. Amen. *Hail Mary*, etc. *Glory be*, etc.

Mary, my sweet beloved,  
Imprint your sorrows upon my heart.

Then the *Stabat Mater* is recited, as above.

Antiphon: "*A sword shall pierce your own soul also*"—Simeon's prophecy to Mary.

*Pray for us, O most sorrowful Virgin.*

*That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

*Let us pray*

*O God, in whose Passion, according to the prophecy of Simeon, a sword of sorrow pierced the sweetest soul of the glorious Virgin and Mother Mary, mercifully grant that we who recall her sorrows may attain the blessed fruit of Your Passion. You who live, etc.*

*Praise be to God and to the most sorrowful Virgin.*

With ecclesiastical approval

The Feast of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary, celebrated by the Pious Union and Society, falls on the third Sunday of September in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi.

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# Don Bosco's devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

*Don Bosco's devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus originated from the revelations to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque in the monastery of Paray-le-Monial: Christ, showing his pierced Heart crowned with thorns, asked for a feast of reparation on the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi. Despite opposition, the cult spread because that Heart, the seat of divine love, recalls the charity manifested on the cross and in the Eucharist. Don Bosco invites young people to honour it constantly, especially in the month of June, by reciting the Crown and performing acts of reparation that obtain copious indulgences and the twelve promises of peace, mercy, and holiness.*

Devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, which is growing every day, listen dear young people, to how it originated. There lived in France, in the monastery of the Visitation in Paray-le-Monial, a humble virgin named Margaret Alacoque, dear to God for her great purity. One day, while she was standing before the Blessed Sacrament to adore the blessed Jesus, she saw her Heavenly Spouse in the act of uncovering his breast and showing her his Most Sacred Heart, radiant with flames, surrounded by thorns, pierced by a wound, and surmounted by a cross. At the same time, she heard Him complain of the monstrous ingratitude of men and ordered her to work to ensure that on the Friday after the Octave of *Corpus Christi*, special worship would be given to His Divine Heart in reparation for the offences He receives in the Most Holy Eucharist. The pious virgin, filled with confusion, explained to Jesus how unfit she was for such a great undertaking, but she was comforted by the Lord to continue her work, and the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was established despite the fierce opposition of her adversaries.

There are many reasons for this devotion: 1) Because Jesus Christ offered us His Sacred Heart as the seat of His affections; 2) Because it is a symbol of the immense charity He showed especially by allowing His Most Sacred Heart to be wounded by a lance; 3) Because from this Heart the faithful are moved to meditate on the sufferings of Jesus Christ and to profess their gratitude to Him.

Let us therefore constantly honour this Divine Heart, which, for the many and great benefits it has already bestowed upon us and will bestow upon us, well deserves all our most humble and loving veneration.

### **Month of June**

Those who consecrate the entire month of June to the honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus with some daily prayer or devout act will gain seven years of indulgence for each day and a Plenary indulgence at the end of the month.

### **Chaplet to the Sacred Heart of Jesus**

Intend to recite this Crown to the Divine Heart of Jesus Christ to make reparation for the outrages He receives in the Most Holy Eucharist from infidels, heretics, and bad Christians. Say it alone or with other people gathered together, if possible before an image of the Divine Heart or before the Blessed Sacrament:

*V. Deus, in adiutorium meum intende* (O God, come to my aid).

*R. Domine ad adjuvandum me festina* (Lord, make haste to help me).

*Glory be to the Father, etc.*

1. O most lovable Heart of my Jesus, I humbly adore your sweet kindness, which you show in a special way in the Divine Sacrament to souls who are still sinners. I am sorry to see you so ungratefully repaid, and I intend to make up for the many offences you receive in the Most Holy Eucharist from heretics, infidels, and bad Christians.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.*



2. O most humble Heart of my Sacramental Jesus, I adore your profound humility in the Divine Eucharist, hiding yourself for our love under the species of bread and wine. I beg you, my Jesus, to instil this beautiful virtue in my heart; meanwhile, I will endeavour to make reparation for the many offences you receive in the Most Holy Sacrament from heretics, infidels, and bad Christians.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.*

3. O Heart of my Jesus, so eager to suffer, I adore those desires so ardent to encounter your most painful Passion and to subject yourself to those wrongs foreseen by you in the Blessed Sacrament. Ah, my Jesus! I truly intend to make reparation with my very life; I would like to prevent those offences which you unfortunately receive in the Most Holy Eucharist from heretics, infidels, and bad Christians.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.*

4. O most patient Heart of my Jesus, I humbly venerate your invincible patience in enduring so many pains on the Cross and so many abuses in the Divine Eucharist for love of me. O my dear Jesus! Since I cannot wash with my blood those places where you were so mistreated in both Mysteries, I promise you, O my Supreme Good, to use every means to make reparation to your Divine Heart for the many outrages you receive in the Most Holy Eucharist from heretics, infidels, and bad Christians.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.*

5. O Heart of my Jesus, most loving of our souls in the admirable institution of the Most Holy Eucharist, I humbly adore that immense love which you bear us in giving us your Divine Body and Divine Blood as our nourishment. What heart is there that should not be consumed at the sight of such immense charity? O my good Jesus, give me abundant tears to weep and make reparation for the many offences you receive in the Most Holy Sacrament from heretics, infidels, and bad

Christians.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.*

6. O Heart of my Jesus, thirsting for our salvation, I humbly venerate that most ardent love which prompted you to perform the ineffable Sacrifice of the Cross, renewing it every day on the Altars in the Holy Mass. Is it possible that the human heart, filled with gratitude, should not burn with such love? Yes, alas, my God; but for the future I promise to do all I can to make reparation for the many outrages you receive in this Mystery of love from heretics, infidels and bad Christians.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.*

Whoever recites even the above 6 *Our Fathers, Hail Marys, and Glory's* before the Blessed Sacrament, the last *Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be*, being said according to the intention of the Supreme Pontiff, will gain 300 days of Indulgence each time.

### **Promises made by Jesus Christ**

### **to Blessed Margaret Alacoque for the devotees of his Divine Heart**

I will give them all the graces necessary in their state of life.

I will make peace reign in their families.

I will console them in all their afflictions.

I will be their safe refuge in life, but especially at the hour of death.

I will fill every undertaking with blessings.

Sinners will find in my Heart the source and infinite ocean of mercy.

Lukewarm souls will become fervent.

Fervent souls will quickly rise to great perfection.

I will bless the house where the image of my Sacred Heart is exposed and honoured.

I will give priests the gift of moving the most hardened hearts.

The names of those who propagate this devotion will be written in my Heart and will never be erased.

**Act of reparation against blasphemies.**

God be blessed.

Blessed be His Holy Name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.

Blessed be the Name of Jesus.

Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Blessed be His Most Loving Heart.

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary Most Holy.

Blessed be the Name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.

Blessed be her Holy and Immaculate Conception.

Blessed be God in His Angels and in His Saints.

An indulgence of *one year* is granted for each time: and *Plenary* to those who recite it for a month, on the day they make Holy Confession and Communion.

**Offered to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus before His Holy Image**

I, NN., to be grateful to You and to make reparation for my infidelities, I give You my heart and consecrate myself entirely to You, my beloved Jesus, and with your help I resolve never to sin again.

Pope Pius VII granted one hundred days of indulgence once a day, reciting it with a contrite heart, and a plenary indulgence once a month to those who recite it every day.

## Prayer to the Most Sacred Heart of Mary

God save you, Most August Queen of Peace, Mother of God; through the Most Sacred Heart of your Son Jesus, Prince of Peace, may His wrath be appeased and may He reign over us in peace. Remember, O Most Pious Virgin Mary, that it has never been heard in the world that anyone who implores your favours has been rejected or abandoned by you. Encouraged by this confidence, I present myself to you: do not despise my prayers, O Mother of the Eternal Word, but hear them favourably and grant them, O Clement, O Pious, O Sweet Virgin Mary.

Pius IX granted an indulgence of 300 days each time this prayer is recited devoutly, and a plenary indulgence once a month to those who recite it every day.

O Jesus, burning with love,  
I never wanted to offend You;  
O my sweet and good Jesus,  
I never want to offend You again.

Sacred Heart of Mary,  
Save my soul.  
Sacred Heart of my Jesus,  
Make me love you more and more.

To you I give my heart,  
Mother of my Jesus – Mother of love.

*(Source: 'Il Giovane Provveduto' (The Young Provided for') the practice of his duties in the exercises of Christian piety for the recitation of the Office of the b. Virgin of vespers all year round and the office of the dead with the addition of a choice of sacred lauds, per Priest John Bosco, 101a edition, Turin, 1885, Salesian Printing and Bookstore, S. Benigno Canavese – S. Per d'Arena – Lucca – Nizza Marittima – Marsiglia – Montevideo – Buenos-Aires', pp. 119-124 [Published Works, pp. 247-253])*

*Photo: Gilded bronze statue of the Sacred Heart on the bell tower of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Rome, a gift from former Salesian students of Argentina. Erected in 1931, it was crafted in Milan by Riccardo Politi based on a design by sculptor Enrico Cattaneo of Turin.*

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## **Don Bosco and the Sacred Heart. Protect, atone, love**

*In 1886, on the eve of the consecration of the new Basilica of the Sacred Heart in the centre of Rome, the 'Salesian Bulletin' wanted to prepare its readers – co-workers, benefactors, young people, families – for a vital encounter with 'the pierced Heart that continues to love'. For a whole year, the magazine presented the Salesian world with a veritable 'rosary' of meditations: each issue linked an aspect of devotion to a pastoral, educational or social urgency that Don Bosco – already exhausted but still lucid – considered strategic for the future of the Church and Italian society. Almost 140 years later, that series remains a small treatise on the spirituality of the heart, written in simple but ardent tones, capable of combining contemplation and practice. Here we present a unified reading of that monthly journey, showing how Salesian intuition still speaks to us today.*

### **February – The guard of honour: in vigil over wounded Love**

The new liturgical year opens in the *Bulletin* with a surprising invitation: not only to adore Jesus, present in the tabernacle, but to 'keep watch over Him' – a freely chosen hour in which every Christian, without interrupting their

daily activities, becomes a loving sentinel who consoles the Heart pierced by the indifference of the carnal. The idea, which originated in Paray-le-Monial and flourished in many dioceses, became an educational programme: to transform time into a space for reparation; to teach young people that fidelity comes from small, constant acts; to make the day a widespread liturgy. The related vow – to donate the proceeds from the *Manual of the Guard of Honour* to the construction of the Roman Basilica – reveals the Salesian logic: contemplation that immediately translates into bricks and mortar, because true prayer (literally) builds the house of God.

### **March – Creative charity: the Salesian stamp**

In his great conference on 8 May 1884, Cardinal Parocchi summarised the Salesian mission in one word: 'charity'. The *Bulletin* takes up that discourse to remind us that the Church conquers the world more with gestures of love than with theoretical disputes. Don Bosco did not establish elite schools but simple hospices. He did not take children out of their environment just to protect them, but to return them to society as solid citizens. It is charity 'according to the needs of the century': a response to materialism not with controversy, but with works that show the power of the Gospel. Hence the urgency of a large sanctuary dedicated to the Heart of Jesus, to make an outstanding visible sign of the love that educates and transforms in the heart of Rome.

### **April – Eucharist: 'masterpiece of the Heart of Jesus'**

Nothing, for Don Bosco, is more urgent than bringing Christians back to frequent Communion. The *Bulletin* reminds us that 'there is no Catholicism without Our Lady and without the Eucharist'. The Eucharistic table is the 'genesis of Christian society': from there fraternity, justice, and purity are born. If faith languishes, the desire for the living Bread must be rekindled. It is no coincidence that St. Francis de Sales entrusted the Visitation Sisters with the mission of guarding the Eucharistic Heart. Devotion to the Sacred Heart is not an

abstract sentiment, but a concrete path that leads to the tabernacle and from there pours out into the streets. And it is once again the Roman construction site that serves as a test. Every lira offered for the basilica becomes a 'spiritual brick' that consecrates Italy to the Heart that gives itself.

### **May – The Heart of Jesus shines in the Heart of Mary**

The Marian month leads the *Bulletin* to intertwine the two great devotions. There is a profound communion between the two Hearts, symbolised by the biblical image of the 'mirror'. The Immaculate Heart of Mary reflects the light of the Divine Heart, making it bearable to human eyes. Those who dare not look at the Sun, look at its light reflected in the Mother. Latria for the Heart of Jesus, 'hyperdulia' for that of Mary: a distinction that avoids the misunderstandings of the Jansenist polemicists of yesterday and today. The *Bulletin* refutes the accusations of idolatry and invites the faithful to a balanced love, where contemplation and mission feed each other. Mary introduces us to her Son and her Son leads us to His Mother. In view of the consecration of the new temple, it asks that the two invocations that stand out on the hills of Rome and Turin be united: Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary Help of Christians.

### **June – Supernatural consolations: love at work in history**

Two hundred years after the first public consecration to the Sacred Heart (Paray-le-Monial, 1686), the *Bulletin* affirms that the devotion responds to the illness of the times: 'the cooling of charity due to an excess of iniquity'. The Heart of Jesus – Creator, Redeemer, Glorifier – is presented as the centre of all history: from creation to the Church; from the Eucharist to eschatology. Those who adore that Heart, enter into a dynamism that transforms culture and politics. This is why Pope Leo XIII asked everyone to contribute to the Roman shrine: a monument of reparation but also a 'bulwark' against the 'impure flood' of modern error. It is an appeal that sounds timely: without ardent charity, society falls apart.

### **July – Humility: the physiognomy of Christ and of Christians**

The summer meditation chooses the most neglected virtue: humility, 'a gem transplanted by the hand of God into the garden of the Church.' Don Bosco, spiritual son of St. Francis de Sales, knows that humility is the door to other virtues and the seal of every true apostolate. Those who serve young people without seeking visibility make present, 'Jesus' hidden life for thirty years.' The *Bulletin* unmask pride disguised as false modesty and invites us to cultivate a double humility: of the intellect, which opens itself to mystery; and of the will, which obeys recognised truth. Devotion to the Sacred Heart is not sentimentality. It is a school of humble thinking and concrete action, capable of building social peace because it removes the poison of pride from the heart.

### **August – Meekness: the strength that disarms**

After humility comes meekness: a virtue that is not weakness but self-control, 'the lion that produces honey', says the text, referring to the enigma of Samson. The Heart of Jesus appears meek in welcoming sinners, firm in defending the temple. Readers are invited to imitate this twofold movement: gentleness towards people, firmness against error. St. Francis de Sales returns as a model. With a calm tone, he poured out rivers of charity in turbulent Geneva, converting more hearts than harsh polemics would have won over. In a century that 'sins by being heartless,' building the sanctuary of the Sacred Heart means erecting a training ground for social meekness—an evangelical response to the contempt and verbal violence that already poisoned public debate at that time.

### **September – Poverty and the social question: the Heart that reconciles rich and poor**

The rumblings of social conflict, warns the *Bulletin*, threaten to 'smash the civil edifice to pieces.' We are in the midst of the 'labour question'. Socialists are stirring up the masses, capital is concentrated. Don Bosco does not deny the legitimacy of honest wealth, but he reminds us that true



revolution begins in the heart. The Heart of Jesus proclaimed the poor blessed and He experienced poverty firsthand. The remedy lies in evangelical solidarity nourished by prayer and generosity. Until the Roman Basilica is completed, writes the newspaper, the visible sign of reconciliation will be missing. In the following decades, the social doctrine of the Church will develop these insights, but the seed is already here. Charity is not almsgiving; it is justice that comes from a transformed heart.

### **October – Childhood: sacrament of hope**

‘Woe to those who scandalise one of these little ones.’ On the lips of Jesus, the invitation becomes a warning. The *Bulletin* recalls the horrors of the pagan world against children and shows how Christianity changed history by entrusting a central place to children. For Don Bosco, education is a religious act; the treasure of the future Church is preserved in schools and oratories. Jesus’ blessing of the children, reproduced on the front pages of the newspaper, is a manifestation of the Heart that “closes itself like a father’s” and announces the Salesian vocation: to make youth a “sacrament” that makes God present in the city. Schools, colleges, and workshops are not optional: they are the concrete way of honouring the Heart of Jesus alive in young people.

### **November – Triumphs of the Church: humility conquers death**

The liturgy commemorates the saints and the dead. The *Bulletin* meditates on the ‘gentle triumph’ of Jesus entering Jerusalem. The image becomes the key to understanding Church history. Successes and persecutions alternate, but the Church, like the Master, always rises again. Readers are invited not to let themselves be paralysed by pessimism. The shadows of the moment (anticlerical laws, reduction of orders, Masonic propaganda) do not cancel out the dynamism of the Gospel. The Basilica of the Sacred Heart, built amid hostility and poverty, will be the tangible sign that, ‘the stone with

the seals has been turned over'. Collaborating in its construction means betting on God's future.

### **December – Beatitude of sorrow: the Cross welcomed by the heart**

The year ends with the most paradoxical of the beatitudes: 'Blessed are those who mourn'. Pain, scandalous to pagan reason, becomes in the Heart of Jesus a path to redemption and fruitfulness. The *Bulletin* sees in this logic, the key to understanding the contemporary crisis. Societies based on entertainment at all costs produce injustice and despair. Accepted in union with Christ, however, pain transforms hearts, strengthens character, stimulates solidarity, and frees us from fear. Even the stones of the sanctuary are 'tears transformed into hope'; small offerings, sometimes the fruit of hidden sacrifices, which will build a place from which, the newspaper promises, 'torrents of chaste delights will rain down.

### **A prophetic legacy**

In the monthly montage of the *Salesian Bulletin* of 1886, the pedagogy of crescendo is striking. It starts with the little hour of watch and ends with the consecration of pain; from the individual faithful to the national building site; from the turreted tabernacle of the oratory to the ramparts of the Esquiline Hill. It is a journey that intertwines three main axes:

*Contemplation* – The Heart of Jesus is first and foremost a mystery to be adored: vigil, Eucharist, reparation.

*Formation* – Every virtue (humility, meekness, poverty) is proposed as a social medicine, capable of healing collective wounds.

*Construction* – Spirituality becomes architecture: the basilica is not an ornament, but a laboratory of Christian citizenship. Without forcing it, we can recognise here the pre-announcement of themes that the Church would develop throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the apostolate of the laity, social doctrine, the

centrality of the Eucharist in the mission, the protection of minors, and the pastoral care of those who suffer. Don Bosco and his collaborators recognised the signs of the times and responded with the language of the heart.

On 14 May 1887, when Leo XIII consecrated the Basilica of the Sacred Heart through his vicar Cardinal Lucido Maria Parocchi, Don Bosco—too weak to ascend the altar—watched hidden among the faithful. At that moment, all the words of the 1886 *Bulletin* became living stone: the guard of honour, educative charity, the Eucharist as the centre of the world, the tenderness of Mary, reconciling poverty, the blessedness of suffering. Today, those pages call for new breath. It is up to us, consecrated or lay, young or old, to continue the vigil, to build sites of hope, to learn the geography of the heart. The programme remains the same, simple and bold: **to guard, to atone, to love.**

*In the photo: Painting of the Sacred Heart, located on the main altar of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Rome. The work was commissioned by Don Bosco and entrusted to the painter Francesco de Rohden (Rome, 15 February 1817 – 28 December 1903).*

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## Don Bosco and Eucharistic processions

*A little-known but important aspect of St John Bosco's charism is Eucharistic processions. For the Saint of young people, the Eucharist was not only a personal devotion but also a pedagogical tool and public witness. In a Turin undergoing transformation, Don Bosco saw processions as an opportunity to*

*strengthen the faith of young people and proclaim Christ in the streets. The Salesian experience, which has continued throughout the world, shows how faith can be embodied in culture and respond to social challenges. Even today, when lived with authenticity and openness, these processions can become prophetic signs of faith.*

When we speak of St. John Bosco (1815-1888), we immediately think of his popular oratories, his passion for educating young people, and the Salesian family born of his charism. Less well known, but no less decisive, is the role that Eucharistic devotion – and in particular Eucharistic processions – played in his work. For Don Bosco, the Eucharist was not only the heart of his inner life; it was also a powerful pedagogical tool and a public sign of social renewal in a Turin undergoing rapid industrial transformation. Retracing the link between the saint of young people and the processions with the Blessed Sacrament means entering a pastoral workshop where liturgy, catechesis, civic education, and human promotion are intertwined in an original and, at times, surprising way.

### **Eucharistic processions in the context of the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

To understand Don Bosco, it is necessary to remember that the 19th century in Italy was marked by intense debate on the public role of religion. After the Napoleonic era and the Risorgimento, religious demonstrations in the streets were no longer a given. In many regions, a liberal State was emerging that viewed any public expression of Catholicism with suspicion, fearing mass gatherings or 'reactionary' resurgence. Eucharistic processions, however, retained a powerful symbolic force. They recalled Christ's lordship over all reality and, at the same time, brought to the fore a popular Church, visible and embodied in the neighbourhoods. Against this backdrop stood the stubbornness of Don Bosco, who never gave up accompanying his boys in witnessing their faith outside the walls of the oratory, whether on the avenues of

Valdocco or in the surrounding countryside.

From his formative years at the seminary in Chieri, John Bosco developed a 'missionary' sensitivity to the Eucharist. The chronicles tell us that he often stopped in the chapel after lessons and spent a long time in prayer before the tabernacle. In his Memoirs of the Oratory, he himself acknowledges that he learned from his spiritual director, Fr. Cafasso, the value of 'becoming bread' for others. Contemplating Jesus giving himself in the Eucharist meant for him, learning the logic of gratuitous love. This line runs through his entire life, "Keep Jesus in the sacrament and Mary Help of Christians as your friends," he would repeat to young people, pointing to frequent Communion and silent adoration as the pillars of a path of lay and daily holiness.

### **The Valdocco oratory and the first internal processions**

In the early 1840s, the Turin oratory did not yet have a proper church. Celebrations took place in wooden huts or in adapted courtyards. Don Bosco, however, did not give up organising small internal processions, almost 'dress rehearsals' for what would become a regular practice. The boys carried candles and banners, sang Marian hymns and, at the end, gathered around a makeshift altar for the Eucharistic benediction. These first attempts had an eminently pedagogical function, to accustom young people to devout but joyful participation, combining discipline and spontaneity. In working-class Turin, where poverty often led to violence, marching in an orderly fashion with a red handkerchief around one's neck was already a sign of going against the tide. It showed that faith could teach respect for oneself and others.

Don Bosco knew well that a procession cannot be improvised. It requires signs, songs, and gestures that speak to the heart even before they speak to the mind. For this reason, he personally took care of explaining the symbols. The canopy became the image of the tent of meeting, a sign of the divine presence accompanying the people on their journey. The flowers

scattered along the route recalled the beauty of the Christian virtues that must adorn the soul. The street lamps, indispensable for evening outings, alluded to the light of faith that illuminates the darkness of sin. Each element was the subject of a small 'sermon' in the refectory or during recreation, so that the logistical preparation was intertwined with systematic catechesis. The result? For the boys, the procession was not a ritual duty but an occasion for celebration full of meaning.

One of the most characteristic aspects of Salesian processions was the presence of a band formed by the students themselves. Don Bosco considered music an antidote to idleness and, at the same time, a powerful tool for evangelisation. "A cheerful march performed well," he wrote, "attracts people like a magnet attracts iron." The band preceded the Blessed Sacrament, alternating sacred pieces with popular tunes adapted with religious lyrics. This 'dialogue' between faith and popular culture reduced the distance between passers-by and created an aura of shared celebration around the procession. Many secular chroniclers testified to having been 'intrigued' by that group of young, disciplined musicians, so different from the military or philharmonic bands of the time.

### **Processions as a response to social crises**

Nineteenth-century Turin experienced cholera epidemics (1854 and 1865), strikes, famines, and anti-clerical tensions. Don Bosco often reacted by proposing extraordinary processions of reparation or supplication. During the cholera epidemic of 1854, he led young people through the most affected streets, reciting litanies for the sick aloud and distributing bread and medicine. It was at that juncture that he made his promise – which he later kept – to build the church of Mary Help of Christians. "If Our Lady saves my boys, I will raise a temple to her." The civil authorities, initially opposed to religious processions for fear of contagion, had to recognise the effectiveness of the Salesian assistance network, which was

spiritually nourished by the processions themselves. The Eucharist, brought to the sick, thus became a tangible sign of Christian compassion.

Contrary to certain devotional models confined to sacristies, Don Bosco's processions claimed a right of citizenship for the faith in the public space. It was not a question of 'occupying' the streets, but of restoring them to their community vocation. Passing under balconies, crossing squares and porticoes meant remembering that the city is not only a place of economic exchange or political confrontation, but also of fraternal encounter. This is why Don Bosco insisted on impeccable order: brushed cloaks, clean shoes, regular rows. He wanted the image of the procession to communicate beauty and dignity, persuading even the most sceptical observers that the Christian proposal elevated the person.

### **The Salesian legacy of processions**

After Don Bosco's death, his spiritual sons spread the practice of Eucharistic processions throughout the world: from agricultural schools in Emilia to missions in Patagonia, from Asian colleges to the working-class neighbourhoods of Brussels. What mattered was not to slavishly duplicate a Piedmontese ritual, but to transmit its pedagogical core: youth protagonism, symbolic catechesis, openness to the surrounding society. Thus, in Latin America, the Salesians included traditional dances at the beginning of the procession. In India, they adopted flower carpets in accordance with local art; in sub-Saharan Africa, they alternated Gregorian chants with tribal polyphonic rhythms. The Eucharist became a bridge between cultures, realising Don Bosco's dream of "making all peoples one family."

From a theological point of view, Don Bosco's processions embody a strong vision of the real presence of Christ. Taking the Blessed Sacrament 'outside' means proclaiming that the Word did not become flesh to remain locked up, but to "pitch his tent among us" (cf. Jn 1:14). This presence demands to be

proclaimed in understandable forms, without being reduced to an intimate gesture. In Don Bosco, the centripetal dynamic of adoration (gathering hearts around the Host) generates a centrifugal dynamic: young people, nourished at the altar, feel sent forth to serve. Micro-commitments spring from the procession: assisting a sick companion, pacifying a quarrel, studying with greater diligence. The Eucharist is prolonged in the 'invisible processions' of daily charity.

Today, in secularised or multi-religious contexts, Eucharistic processions can raise questions. Are they still communicative? Do they risk appearing like nostalgic folklore? Don Bosco's experience suggests that the key lies in the quality of relationships rather than in the quantity of incense or vestments. A procession that involves families, explains symbols, integrates contemporary artistic languages, and above all connects with concrete gestures of solidarity, maintains a surprising prophetic power. The recent Synod on Young People (2018) repeatedly recalled the importance of "going out" and "showing faith with our flesh." The Salesian tradition, with its itinerant liturgy, offers a tried and tested paradigm of the "Church going forth."

For Don Bosco, Eucharistic processions were not simply liturgical traditions, but true educative, spiritual, and social acts. They represented a synthesis of lived faith, an educating community, and public witness. Through them, Don Bosco formed young people capable of adoring, respecting, serving, and witnessing.

Today, in a fragmented and distracted world, re-proposing the value of Eucharistic processions in the light of the Salesian charism can be an effective way to rediscover the meaning of what is essential: Christ present among His people, who walk with Him, adore Him, serve Him, and proclaim Him.

In an age that seeks authenticity, visibility, and relationships, the Eucharistic procession – if lived according to the spirit of Don Bosco – can be a powerful sign of hope



and renewal.

*Photo: Shutterstock*

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# Patagonia: “The greatest enterprise of our Congregation”

*Upon arriving in Patagonia, the Salesians—led by Don Bosco—aimed to establish an Apostolic Vicariate to secure pastoral autonomy and support from Propaganda Fide. Between 1880 and 1882, repeated appeals to Rome, Argentine President Roca, and the Archbishop of Buenos Aires were thwarted by political unrest and ecclesiastical scepticism. Missionaries such as Rizzo, Fagnano, Costamagna, and Beauvoir travelled along the Río Negro, the Colorado, and as far as Lake Nahuel-Huapi, establishing missions among Indigenous communities and settlers. The turning point came on 16 November 1883: a decree established the Vicariate of Northern Patagonia, entrusted to Bishop Giovanni Cagliero, and the Southern Prefecture, led by Bishop Giuseppe Fagnano. From that moment, the Salesian mission took root “at the end of the world,” laying the groundwork for its future flourishing.*

The Salesians had only just arrived in Patagonia when Don Bosco, on 22 March 1880, returned again to the various Roman Congregations and Pope Leo XIII himself with a request for the erection of a Vicariate or Prefecture of Patagonia with its headquarters in Carmen, which would embrace the colonies already established or that were being organised on the banks of the Río Negro, from 36° to 50° South latitude. Carmen could have become “the centre of the Salesian Missions

among the Indians”.

But the military unrest at the time of General Roca's election as President of the Republic (May-August 1880) and the death of the Salesian Provincial, Fr Francis Bodrato (August 1880), caused the plans to be put on hold. Don Bosco also insisted with the President in November, but to no avail. The Vicariate was neither wanted by the archbishop nor liked by the political authority.

A few months later, in January 1881, Don Bosco encouraged the newly appointed Provincial, Fr Giacomo Costamagna, to get busy with the Vicariate in Patagonia and assured the rector-parish priest Fr Fagnano that with regard to Patagonia – “the greatest undertaking of our Congregation” – a great responsibility would soon fall on him. But the impasse remained.

Meanwhile in Patagonia Fr Emilio Rizzo, who in 1880 had accompanied the Vicar General of Buenos Aires, Monsignor Espinosa, along the Río Negro to Roca (50 km), with other Salesians was preparing for further flying missions along the same river. Fr Fagnano was then able to accompany the army up to the Cordillera in 1881. Don Bosco trembled impatiently and Fr Costamagna again in November 1881 advised him to negotiate directly with Rome.

As luck would have it, Monsignor Espinosa came to Italy at the end of 1881; Don Bosco took the opportunity to inform the Archbishop of Buenos Aires through him, who in April 1882 seemed favourable to the project of a Vicariate entrusted to the Salesians. More than anything, perhaps, because he did not have the clergy to serve there. But once again nothing came of it. In the summer of 1882 and then again in 1883 Fr Beauvoir accompanied the army as far as Lake Nahuel-Huapi in the Andes (880 km); other Salesians had made similar apostolic excursions in April along the Río Colorado, while Fr Beauvoir returned to Roca and in August Fr Milanesio went as far as Ñorquín in Neuquén (900 km).

Don Bosco was more and more convinced that without their own Vicariate Apostolic the Salesians would not have

enjoyed the necessary freedom of action, given the very difficult relations he had had with his Archbishop in Turin and also taking into account that the First Vatican Council itself had not decided anything about the sometimes difficult relationships between Ordinaries and Superiors of Religious Congregations in mission territories. Furthermore, and this was no small thing, only a missionary Vicariate could have financial support from the Congregation of Propaganda Fide.

Therefore Don Bosco resumed his efforts, putting forward to the Holy See a proposal for the administrative subdivision of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego into three Vicariates or Prefectures: from Río Colorado to Río Chubut, from these to Río Santa Cruz, and from these to the islands of Tierra del Fuego, including Malvinas (Falklands).

Pope Leo XIII agreed a few months later and asked him for possible names for these. Don Bosco then suggested to Cardinal Simeoni the erection of a single Vicariate for northern Patagonia with its headquarters in Carmen, on which a Prefecture Apostolic for southern Patagonia would depend. For the latter he proposed Fr Fagnano; for the Vicariate Fr Cagliero or Fr Costamagna.

### **A dream come true**

On 16 November 1883 a decree from Propaganda Fide erected the Vicariate Apostolic of Northern and Central Patagonia, which included the south of the province of Buenos Aires, the national territories of La Pampa central, Río Negro, Neuquén and Chubut. Four days later he entrusted it to Fr Cagliero as Provicar Apostolic (and later Vicar Apostolic). On 2 December 1883, it was Fagnano's turn to be appointed Prefect Apostolic of Chilean Patagonia, the Chilean territory of Magallanes-Punta Arenas, the Argentine territory of Santa Cruz, the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands and the undefined islands stretching as far as the Strait of Magellan. Ecclesiastically, the Prefecture covered areas belonging to the Chilean diocese of San Carlos de Ancud.

The dream of the famous train journey from

Cartagena in Colombia to Punta Arenas in Chile on 10 August 1883 was thus beginning to come true, all the more so since some Salesians from Montevideo in Uruguay had come to found the house of Niteroi in Brazil at the beginning of 1883. The long process of being able to run a mission in full canonical freedom had come to an end. In October 1884 Fr Cagliero would be appointed Vicar Apostolic of Patagonia, where he would enter on 8 July, seven months after his episcopal consecration at Valdocco on 7 December 1884.

## **The sequel**

Although in the midst of difficulties of all kinds that history recalls – including accusations and outright calumnies – the Salesian work from those timid beginnings rapidly unfolded in both Argentine and Chilean Patagonia. It took root mostly in very small centres of Indians and settlers, which today have become towns and cities. Bishop Fagnano settled in Punta Arenas (Chile) in 1887, from where he shortly afterwards started missions in the islands of Tierra del Fuego. Generous and capable missionaries spent their lives on both sides of the Strait of Magellan “or the salvation of the souls” and even bodies (as far as they were able) of the inhabitants of those lands “down there, at the end of the world”. Many recognised this, among them a person who knows about it, because he himself came “almost from the end of the world”: Pope Francis.

*Historical photograph: The three Bororòs who accompanied the Salesian missionaries to Cuyabà (1904)*

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# The Prophecies of Malachy. The Popes and the End of the World

*The so-called "Prophecies of Malachy" represent one of the most fascinating and controversial prophetic texts concerning the destiny of the Catholic Church and the world. Attributed to Malachy of Armagh, an Irish archbishop who lived in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, these predictions briefly describe, through enigmatic Latin mottos, the pontiffs from Celestine II up to the final pope, the mysterious "Peter the Second". Although modern scholars consider them forgeries dating back to the late sixteenth century, the prophecies continue to spark debates, apocalyptic interpretations, and speculation about possible eschatological scenarios. Regardless of their authenticity, they nevertheless represent a strong call to spiritual vigilance and conscious waiting for the final judgment.*

## **Malachy of Armagh. Biography of a "Boniface of Ireland"**

Malachy (in Irish *Máel Máedóc Ua Morgair*, in Latin *Malachias*) was born around 1094 near Armagh, into a noble family. He received his intellectual formation from the learned Imhar O'Hagan and, despite his initial reluctance, was ordained a priest in 1119 by Archbishop Cellach. After a period of liturgical refinement at the monastery of Lismore, Malachy undertook intense pastoral activity that led him to hold positions of increasing responsibility. In 1123, as Abbot of Bangor, he initiated the restoration of sacramental discipline; in 1124, appointed Bishop of Down and Connor, he continued liturgical and pastoral reform; and in 1132, having become Archbishop of Armagh after difficult disputes with local usurpers, he liberated the primatial see of Ireland and promoted the diocesan structure sanctioned by the Synod of

Ráth Breasail.

During his ministry, Malachy introduced significant reforms by adopting the Roman liturgy, replacing clan-based monastic inheritances with the diocesan structure prescribed by the Synod of Ráth Breasail (1111), and promoted individual confession, sacramental marriage, and confirmation.

For these reform efforts, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux compared him to Saint Boniface, the apostle of Germany.

Malachy made two journeys to Rome (1139 and 1148) to receive the metropolitan pallium for the new ecclesiastical provinces of Ireland, and on that occasion was appointed papal legate. Upon returning from his first journey, with the help of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, he founded the Cistercian abbey of Mellifont (1142), the first of numerous Cistercian foundations on Irish soil. He died during a second journey towards Rome, on November 2, 1148, in Clairvaux, in the arms of Saint Bernard, who wrote his biography titled "*Vita Sancti Malachiae*" (Life of Saint Malachy).

In 1190, Pope Clement III officially canonized him, making him the first Irish saint proclaimed according to the formal procedure of the Roman Curia.

### **The "Prophecy of the Popes": a text that appears four centuries later**

Only in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was a collection of 112 mottos associated with this reforming archbishop, supposedly describing as many pontiffs: from Celestine II to the enigmatic "Peter the Second," destined to witness the destruction of the "city of seven hills."

The first publication of these prophecies, dating back to 1595, when the Benedictine monk Arnold Wion included them in his work *Lignum Vitae*, presenting them as a manuscript written by Malachy during his visit to Rome in 1139.

The prophecies consist of short, symbolic phrases intended to characterize each pope through references to their name,

birthplace, coat of arms, or significant events of their pontificate. Below are the mottos attributed to the most recent pontiffs:

**109** – *\*De medietate Lunae\** (“From the half of the moon”)

Attributed to John Paul I, who reigned for only one month. He was elected on 26.08.1978, when the moon was in its last quarter (25.08.1978), and died on 28.09.1978, when the moon was in its first quarter (24.09.1978).

**110** – *\*De labore solis\** (“From the labour of the sun”)

Attributed to John Paul II, who led the Church for 26 years, the third-longest pontificate in history after Saint Peter (34-37 years) and Blessed Pius IX (more than 31 years). He was elected on 16.10.1978, shortly after a partial solar eclipse (02.10.1978), and died on 02.04.2005, a few days before an annular solar eclipse (08.04.2005).

**111** – *\*Gloria olivae\** (“Glory of the olive”)

Attributed to Benedict XVI (2005-2013). Cardinal Ratzinger, engaged in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, chose the name Benedict XVI in continuity with Benedict XV, a pope who worked for peace during World War I, as he himself explained in his first General Audience on April 27, 2005 (peace is symbolized by the olive branch brought by the dove to Noah at the end of the Flood). This symbolic connection was further strengthened by the canonization in 2009 of Bernardo Tolomei (1272-1348), founder of the Benedictine congregation of Santa Maria di Monte Oliveto (Olivetan Monks).

**112[a]** – *\*In persecutione extrema Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae sedebit...\**

This is not strictly a motto, but an introductory phrase. In the original 1595 edition, it appears as a separate line, suggesting the possibility of inserting additional popes between Benedict XVI and the prophesied “Peter the Second.” This would contradict the interpretation that necessarily identifies Pope Francis as the last pontiff.

## **112[b] – *\*Petrus Secundus\****

Refers to the last pope (the Church had Saint Peter as its first pontiff and will have another Peter as its last) who will guide the faithful in times of tribulation.

The entire paragraph of the prophecy reads:

*\*“In persecutione extrema Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae sedebit Petrus Secundus, qui pascet oves in multis tribulationibus; quibus transactis, Civitas septicollis diruetur, et Iudex tremendus judicabit populum suum. Amen.” \**

“During the final persecution of the Holy Roman Church, Peter the Second will sit, who will feed his sheep amidst many tribulations; when these things are finished, the city of seven hills [Rome] will be destroyed, and the terrible Judge will judge his people. Amen.”

“Peter the Second” would thus be the last pontiff before the end of times, with a clear apocalyptic reference to the destruction of Rome and the final judgment.

## **Contemporary Speculations**

In recent years, speculative interpretations have multiplied: some identify Pope Francis as the 112<sup>th</sup> and final pontiff, others suggest that he is a transitional pope leading to the true last pope, and some even predict 2027 as a possible date for the end of times.

This last hypothesis is based on a curious calculation: from the first papal election mentioned in the prophecy (Celestine II in 1143) until the first publication of the text (during the pontificate of Sixtus V, 1585-1590), about 442 years passed; following the same logic, adding another 442 years from the publication would lead to 2027. These speculations, however, lack a scientific basis, as the original manuscript contains no explicit chronological references.

## **Contested Authenticity**

Since the text’s appearance, numerous historians have expressed doubts about its authenticity for several reasons:



- **absence of ancient manuscripts:** no copies datable before 1595 exist;
- **linguistic style:** the Latin used is typical of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, not the 12<sup>th</sup>;
- **retrospective accuracy:** the mottos referring to popes before the conclave of 1590 are surprisingly accurate, while those subsequent are much vaguer and easily adaptable to later events;
- **political purposes:** in an era of strong tensions between curial factions, such a prophetic list could have influenced the cardinal electors in the Conclave of 1590.

### **The Church's Position**

Catholic doctrine teaches, as reported in the [Catechism](#), that the destiny of the Church cannot be different from that of its Head, Jesus Christ. Paragraphs 675-677 describe "The Church's ultimate trial":

*Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the "mystery of iniquity" in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh.*

*The Antichrist's deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the eschatological judgment. The Church has rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism, especially the "intrinsically perverse" political form of a secular messianism.*

*The Church will enter the glory of the kingdom only through this final Passover, when she will follow her Lord in his*

*death and Resurrection. The kingdom will be fulfilled, then, not by a historic triumph of the Church through a progressive ascendancy, but only by God's victory over the final unleashing of evil, which will cause his Bride to come down from heaven. God's triumph over the revolt of evil will take the form of the Last Judgment after the final cosmic upheaval of this passing world.*

At the same time, official Catholic doctrine urges prudence, based on the very words of Jesus:

*"Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray" (Mt 24:11).*

*"For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Mt 24:24).*

The Church emphasizes, following the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 24:36), that the time of the end of the world cannot be known by humans, but only by God Himself. And the official Magisterium – The Catechism (no. 673-679) reiterates that no one can "read" the hour of Christ's return.

The prophecies attributed to Saint Malachy have never received official approval from the Church. However, beyond their historical authenticity, they remind us of a fundamental truth of the Christian faith: the end of times will occur, as taught by Jesus.

For two thousand years, people have reflected on this eschatological event, often forgetting that the "end of times" for each individual coincides with the end of their own earthly existence. What does it matter if the end of our life coincides with the end of times? For many, it will not. What truly matters is authentically living the Christian life day by day, following the teachings of Christ and always being ready to account to the Creator and Redeemer for the talents received. Jesus' warning remains ever relevant: "Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on which day your Lord will

come" (Mt 24:42).

In this light, the mystery of "Peter the Second" represents not so much a threat of ruin, but rather an invitation to constant conversion and trust in the divine plan of salvation.

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# Is Confession Still Necessary?

*The Sacrament of Confession, often overlooked in today's hectic world, remains for the Catholic Church an irreplaceable source of grace and inner renewal. We invite you to rediscover its original meaning: not a mere formal ritual, but a personal encounter with God's mercy, established by Christ himself and entrusted to the ministry of the Church. In an age that downplays sin, Confession proves to be a compass for the conscience, medicine for the soul, and a wide-open door to peace of heart.*

## **The Sacrament of Confession: A Necessity for the Soul**

In the Catholic tradition, the Sacrament of Confession—also called the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Penance—holds a central place on the journey of faith. It is not merely a formal act or a practice reserved for a few particularly devout faithful, but a profound necessity involving every Christian called to live in God's grace. In an age that tends to relativize the concept of sin, rediscovering the beauty and liberating power of Confession is fundamental to fully responding to God's love.

Jesus Christ himself instituted the Sacrament of Confession. After His Resurrection, He appeared to the Apostles and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven

them, and whose sins you retain are retained" (Jn 20:22-23). These words are not symbolic; they establish a real and concrete power entrusted to the Apostles and, through succession, to their successors, the bishops and priests.

The forgiveness of sins, therefore, does not happen only privately between man and God, but also passes through the ministry of the Church. God, in His plan of salvation, willed that personal confession before a priest be the ordinary means of receiving His forgiveness.

### **The Reality of Sin**

To understand the necessity of Confession, one must first become aware of the reality of sin.

Saint Paul states, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). And, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn 1:8).

No one can claim immunity from sin, not even after Baptism, which purified us from original sin. Our human nature, wounded by concupiscence, continually leads us to fall, to betray God's love through actions, words, omissions, and thoughts.

Saint Augustine writes, "It is true; man's nature was originally created without fault and without any vice. conversely, the present nature of man, through which everyone is born from Adam, now needs the Physician, because it is not healthy. Certainly, all the goods it possesses in its structure, in its life, senses, and mind, it receives from the supreme God, its creator and maker. The vice, however, which obscures and weakens these natural goods, thus making human nature needy of illumination and care, was not derived from its irreproachable maker, but from original sin which was committed through free will." (Nature and Grace).

Denying the existence of sin is tantamount to denying the truth about ourselves. Only by recognizing our need for forgiveness can we open ourselves to the mercy of God, who never tires of calling us back to Himself.

## **Confession: Encounter with Divine Mercy**

The Sacrament of Confession is, first and foremost, a personal encounter with Divine Mercy. It is not simply self-accusation or a session of self-analysis. It is an act of love from God who, like the father in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32), runs to meet the repentant child, embraces him, and clothes him with new dignity.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: *“Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God’s mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer cooperates for their conversion.”* (CCC, 1422).

To confess is to allow oneself to be loved, healed, and renewed. It is to welcome the gift of a new heart.

## **Why Confess to a Priest?**

One of the most common objections is, “Why must I confess to a priest? Can’t I confess directly to God?” Certainly, every member of the faithful can – and should – turn directly to God with a prayer of repentance. However, Jesus established a concrete, visible, and sacramental means for forgiveness: confession to an ordained minister. And this applies to every Christian, meaning also priests, bishops, and popes.

The priest acts *in persona Christi*, that is, in the person of Christ Himself. He listens, judges, absolves, and offers spiritual counsel. This is not a human mediation that limits God’s love, but rather a guarantee offered by Christ Himself; forgiveness is communicated visibly, and the faithful can have certainty of it.

Furthermore, confessing before a priest demands humility, an indispensable virtue for spiritual growth. Openly acknowledging one’s faults frees us from the yoke of pride and opens us to the true freedom of the children of God.

It is not enough to confess only once a year, as required by the minimum of ecclesiastical law. The saints and spiritual masters have always recommended frequent confession – even bi-weekly or weekly – as a means of progress in the Christian life.

Saint John Paul II went to confession every week. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, despite being a Carmelite nun living in enclosure, confessed regularly. Frequent confession allows one to refine the conscience, correct ingrained faults, and receive new graces.

### **Obstacles to Confession**

Unfortunately, many faithful today neglect the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Among the main reasons are:

**Shame:** fearing the priest's judgment. But the priest is not there to condemn, but to be an instrument of mercy.

***Fear that confessed sins will be made public:*** confessors cannot reveal to anyone, under any circumstances (including the highest ecclesiastical authorities), the sins heard in confession, even at the cost of their own lives. If they do, they immediately incur *latae sententiae* excommunication (Canon 1386, Code of Canon Law). The inviolability of the sacramental seal admits no exceptions or dispensations. And the conditions are the same even if the Confession did not end with sacramental absolution. Even after the penitent's death, the confessor is bound to observe the sacramental seal.

***Lack of a sense of sin:*** in a culture that minimizes evil, one risks no longer recognizing the gravity of one's faults.

***Spiritual laziness:*** postponing Confession is a common temptation that leads to a cooling of the relationship with God.

***Erroneous theological convictions:*** some mistakenly believe that simply "repenting in one's heart" is sufficient without

the need for sacramental Confession.

***Despair of salvation:*** Some think that for them, there will be no more forgiveness anyway. Saint Augustine says: “Indeed, some, after having fallen into sin, lose themselves even more through despair and not only neglect the medicine of repentance but become slaves to lusts and wicked desires to satisfy dishonest and reprehensible cravings, as if by not doing so they would lose even that to which lust incites them, convinced they are already on the brink of certain damnation. Against this extremely dangerous and harmful disease, the memory of the sins into which even the just and holy have fallen is beneficial.” (ibid.)

To overcome these obstacles, one must seek advice from those who can give it, educate oneself, and pray.

### **Preparing Well for Confession**

A good confession requires adequate preparation, which includes:

- 1. *Examination of conscience:*** sincerely reflecting on one's sins, perhaps aided by lists based on the Ten Commandments, the capital sins, or the Beatitudes.
- 2. *Contrition:*** sincere sorrow for having offended God, not just fear of punishment.
- 3. *Purpose of amendment:*** a real desire to change one's life, to avoid future sin.
- 4. *Integral confession of sins:*** confessing all mortal sins completely, specifying their nature and number (if possible).
- 5. *Penance:*** accepting and performing the act of reparation proposed by the confessor.

### **The Effects of Confession**

Confession does not merely produce an external cancellation of sin. The internal effects are profound and transformative:

***Reconciliation with God:*** Sin breaks communion with God; Confession re-establishes it, bringing us back into full divine friendship.

***Inner peace and serenity:*** Receiving absolution brings profound peace. The conscience is freed from the burden of guilt, and a new joy is experienced.

***Spiritual strength:*** Through sacramental grace, the penitent receives special strength to fight future temptations and grow in virtue.

***Reconciliation with the Church:*** Since every sin also damages the Mystical Body of Christ, Confession also mends our bond with the ecclesial community.

The spiritual vitality of the Church also depends on the personal renewal of its members. Christians who rediscover the Sacrament of Confession become, almost without realizing it, more open to others, more missionary, more capable of radiating the light of the Gospel in the world. Only those who have experienced God's forgiveness can proclaim it convincingly to others.

The Sacrament of Confession is an immense and irreplaceable gift. It is the ordinary way through which Christians can return to God whenever they stray. It is not a burden, but a privilege; not a humiliation, but a liberation.

We are called, therefore, to rediscover this Sacrament in its truth and beauty, to practice it with an open and trusting heart, and to joyfully propose it also to those who have strayed. As the psalmist affirms, "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Ps 32:1).

Today, more than ever, the world needs purified and reconciled souls, capable of testifying that God's mercy is stronger than sin. If we did not do so at Easter, let us take advantage of the Marian month of May and approach Confession without fear;



there awaits us the smile of a Father who never stops loving us.

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## Finally in Patagonia!

*Between 1877 and 1880, the Salesian missionary shift towards Patagonia took place. After the offer of the parish of Carhué on May 12, 1877, Don Bosco dreamed of evangelizing the southern lands, but Don Cagliero urged caution in the face of cultural difficulties. The initial attempts were delayed, while General Roca's "desert campaign" (1879) reshaped the balance with the indigenous people. On August 15, 1879, Archbishop Aneiros entrusted the Patagonian mission to the Salesians: "The time has finally come when I can offer you the Mission of Patagonia, for which your heart has long yearned." On January 15, 1880, the first group led by Don Giuseppe Fagnano set out, marking the beginning of the Salesian epic in southern Argentina.*

What made Don Bosco and Fr Cagliero suspend, at least temporarily, any missionary project in Asia was the news on 12 May 1877: the Archbishop of Buenos Aires had offered the Salesians the mission of Caruhé (south east of Buenos Aires Province), a place of garrison and frontier between numerous tribes of indigenous people from the vast desert of the Pampas and Buenos Aires Province.

Thus the doors of Patagonia were open to the Salesians for the first time: Don Bosco was thrilled, but Fr Cagliero immediately cooled his enthusiasm: "I repeat, however, that with regard to Patagonia we must not run with electric speed, nor go there by steam, because the Salesians are not yet prepared for this enterprise [...] too much has been published and we have been able to do too little with regard

to the Indians. It is easy to conceive, difficult to accomplish, and it is too short a time that we have been here, and we must work with zeal and activity to this end, but not make a fuss, so as not to arouse the admiration of these people here, seeking to aspire, having arrived yesterday, to the conquest of a country that we do not yet know and whose language we do not even know."

With the option of Carmen de Patagónes no longer available, since archbishop had entrusted the parish to a Lazarist (Vincentian) priest, the Salesians were left with the northernmost parish of Carhué and the southernmost parish of Santa Cruz. Fr Cagliero had obtained a passage there by sea in the spring, which would have delayed his planned return to Italy by six months.

The decision of who should "enter Patagonia first" was thus left to Don Bosco, who intended to offer him that honour. But before he even knew it, Fr Cagliero decided to return: "Patagonia is waiting for me, those from Dolores, Carhué, Chaco are asking for us, and I will please them all by running away!" (8 July 1877). He returned to attend the 1st General Chapter of the Salesian Society to be held in Lanzo Torinese in September. Among other things, he was always a member of the Congregation's Superior Chapter, where he held the important position of Catechist General (he was number three in the Congregation, after Don Bosco and Fr Rua).

1877 closed with the third expedition of 26 missionaries led by Fr Giacomo Costamagna and with Don Bosco's new request to the Holy See for a Prefecture at Carhué and a Vicariate at Santa Cruz. Yet, to tell the truth, in the whole year the direct evangelisation of the Salesians outside the city had been limited to the brief experience of Fr Cagliero and cleric Evasio Rabagliati in the Italian colony at Villa Libertad, near Entre Ríos (April 1877) on the borders of the Diocese of Paraná, as well as some excursions to the Salesian camp in St. Nicolas de los Arroyos.

**The dream is realised (1880)**

In May 1878 the first attempt to reach Carhué by Fr Costamagna and the cleric Rabagliati failed because of a storm (they were travelling by sea). But in the meantime Don Bosco had already resumed his efforts with the new Prefect of Propaganda Fide, Cardinal Giovanni Simeoni, proposing a Vicariate or Prefecture based in Carmen, as Fr Fagnano himself had suggested, which he saw as a strategic point to reach the natives.

The following year (1879), just as a plan for the Salesians to enter Paraguay was eventuating, the doors of Patagonia were finally opened to them. In April in fact, General Julio A. Roca started the famous "desert campaign" with the aim of subduing the Indians and obtaining internal security, pushing them back beyond the Río Negro and Neuquén rivers. It was the "coup de grace" in their extermination, after the numerous massacres of the previous year.

The Vicar General of Buenos Aires, Monsignor Espinosa, as chaplain to an army of six thousand men, was accompanied by the Argentinean cleric Luigi Botta and Fr Costamagna. The future bishop immediately realised the ambiguity of their position, immediately wrote to Don Bosco, but saw no other way to open the road to Patagonia to the Salesian missionaries. And indeed, as soon as the government asked the archbishop to establish some missions on the banks of the Río Negro and in Patagonia, the Salesians were immediately thought of.

The Salesians, for their part, had the intention of asking the government for a ten-year concession of a territory administered by them in which to construct, with materials paid for by the government and with labour from the Indians, the buildings necessary for a sort of *reducción* in that territory: the poor would avoid the contamination of the "corrupt and vicious" Christian settlers and the missionaries would plant the cross of Christ and the Argentine flag there. But Salesian Provincial Fr Francis Bodrato did not feel like deciding on his own, and Fr Lasagna advised against it in May on the grounds that the Avellaneda government was at the end

of its term and was not interested in the religious problem. It was therefore better to preserve Salesian independence and freedom of action.

On 15 August 1879 Archbishop Aneiros formally offered Don Bosco the Patagonian mission: "The moment has finally arrived, in which I can offer you the Patagonian Mission, for which your heart has so longed, as the care of souls among the Patagonians, which can serve as a centre for the mission."

Don Bosco accepted it immediately and willingly, even though it was not yet the longed-for consent to the erection of ecclesiastical circumscriptions autonomous from the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires, a reality constantly opposed by the diocesan Ordinary.

### **The departure**

The group of missionaries left for the longed-for Patagonia on 15 January 1880: it was made up of Fr Giuseppe Fagnano, director of the Mission and parish priest in Carmen de Patagónes (the Lazarist Father had retired), two priests, one of whom was in charge of the parish of Viedma on the other bank of the Río Negro, a lay Salesian (Brother) and four Sisters. In December, Fr Dominic Milanesio arrived to help out, and a few months later Fr Joseph Beauvoir arrived with another novice Brother. The Salesian missionary epic in Patagonia was beginning.

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## **Habemus Papam: Leo XIV**

On 8 May 2025, the feast day of Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii, ***Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost*** (69) was elected as the **267<sup>th</sup> Pope**. He is the first Pope born in the United States and has chosen the name *Leo XIV*.

## **Here is a brief biography**

**Birth:** 14 September 1955, Chicago (Illinois, USA)

**Family:** Louis Marius Prevost (of French and Italian origin) and Mildred Martínez (of Spanish origin); brothers Louis Martín and John Joseph

**Languages:** English, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and French; reads Latin and German

**Nickname in Peru:** '*Latin Yankee*' – a summary of his dual cultural identity

**Citizenship:** American and Peruvian

### **Education**

- Augustinian minor seminary (1973)
- Bachelor's degree in Mathematical Sciences, Villanova University (1977)
- Master of Divinity, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago (1982)
- Licentiate in Canon Law, Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas – Angelicum (1984)
- Doctorate in Canon Law, Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas – Angelicum (1987), with a thesis entitled: 'The role of the local prior of the Order of St. Augustine'
- Religious profession: novitiate of Saint Louis of the Province of Our Lady of Good Counsel of the Order of Saint Augustine (1977)
- Solemn vows (29 August 1981)
- Priestly ordination: 19 June 1982, Rome (by Archbishop Jean Jadot)

### **Ministry and main appointments**

1985-1986: Missionary in Chulucanas, Piura (Peru)

1987: Director of vocations and director of missions of the Augustinian Province 'Mother of Good Counsel' in Olympia Fields, Illinois (USA)

1988: Sent to the mission in Trujillo (Peru) as director of the joint formation program for Augustinian aspirants from the

Vicariates of Chulucanas, Iquitos, and Apurímac

1988-1992: Director of the community

1992-1998: Teacher of professed friars

1989-1998: Judicial Vicar in the Archdiocese of Trujillo, professor of Canon Law, Patristics, and Morals at the Major Seminary 'San Carlos y San Marcelo'

1999: Provincial Prior of the Province "Mother of Good Counsel" (Chicago)

2001-2013: Prior General of the Augustinians for two terms (approx. 2,700 religious in 50 countries)

2013: Teacher of professed religious and Provincial Vicar in his Province (Chicago)

2014: Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Chiclayo and Titular Bishop of Sufar, Peru (episcopal appointment on 3 November 2014)

2014: Episcopal consecration on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (12 December 2014)

2015: appointed bishop of Chiclayo (26 September 2015)

2018: 2<sup>nd</sup> vice-president of the Episcopal Conference of Peru (8 March 2018 – 30 January 2023)

2020: Apostolic Administrator of Callao, Peru (15 April 2020 – 17 April 2021)

2023: Archbishop ad personam (30 January 2023 – 30 September 2023)

2023: Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops (30 January 2023 [12 April 2023] – 9 May 2025)

2023: President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America (30 January 2023 [12 April 2023] – 9 May 2025)

2023: Created Cardinal Deacon, titular of St. Monica of the Augustinians (30.09.2023 [28.01.2024] – 06.02.2025)

2025: Promoted to Cardinal Bishop of the Suburbicarian Diocese of Albano (06.02.2025 – 08.05.2025)

2025: Elected Supreme Pontiff (08.05.2025)

### **Service in the Roman Curia**

He was a member of the Dicasteries for Evangelization, Section for First Evangelization and New Churches; for the Doctrine of

the Faith; for the Eastern Churches; for the Clergy; for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life; for Culture and Education; for Legislative Texts, and of the Pontifical Commission for the Vatican City State

May the Holy Spirit enlighten his ministry, as he did with the great Saint Augustine.

Let us pray for a fruitful pontificate rich with hope!

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# Election of the 266th Successor of Saint Peter

*Every death or resignation of a Pontiff opens one of the most delicate phases in the life of the Catholic Church: the election of the Successor of Saint Peter. Although the last conclave dates back to March 2013, when Jorge Mario Bergoglio became Pope Francis, understanding how a Pope is elected remains essential to grasp the functioning of a millennia-old institution that influences over 1.3 billion faithful and – indirectly – global geopolitics.*

## 1. The Vacant See

Everything begins with the **vacant see**, that is, the period between the death (or resignation) of the reigning Pontiff and the election of the new one. The apostolic constitution *Universi Dominici Gregis*, promulgated by John Paul II on February 22, 1996, and updated by Benedict XVI in 2007 and 2013, establishes detailed procedures.

### *Verification of the vacancy*

In case of death: the Cardinal Camerlengo – currently Cardinal Kevin Farrell – officially confirms the death, closes and

seals the papal apartment, and notifies the Dean of the College of Cardinals.

In case of resignation: the vacant see begins at the time indicated in the resignation act, as happened at 8:00 PM on February 28, 2013, for Benedict XVI.

### *Ordinary administration*

During the vacant see, the Camerlengo manages the material assets of the Holy See but cannot perform acts reserved exclusively for the Pontiff (such as episcopal appointments, doctrinal decisions, etc.).

### *General and particular congregations*

All cardinals – electors and non-electors – present in Rome gather in the Synod Hall to discuss urgent matters. The “particular” congregations include the Camerlengo and three cardinals drawn by lot in rotation; the “general” congregations summon the entire College of Cardinals and are used, among other things, to set the start date of the conclave.

## **2. Who can elect and who can be elected**

### *The electors*

Since Paul VI's motu proprio *Ingravescentem aetatem* (1970), **only cardinals who have not reached the age of 80 before the start of the vacant see have the right to vote.** The maximum number of electors is set at 120, but this can be temporarily exceeded due to closely spaced consistories.

Electors must:

- be present in Rome by the start of the conclave (except for serious reasons);
- take an oath of secrecy;
- stay at the *Domus Sanctae Marthae*, the residence established by John Paul II to ensure dignity and discretion.

The enclosure is not a medieval whim: it aims to protect the cardinals' freedom of conscience and shield the Church from undue interference. Breaking the secrecy results in automatic excommunication.



### *Those eligible*

In theory, **any baptized male** can be elected Pope, since the Petrine office is of divine right. However, from the Middle Ages to today, the Pope has always been chosen from among the cardinals. If a non-cardinal or even a layman were chosen, he would have to be immediately ordained a bishop.

### **3. The conclave: etymology, logistics, and symbolism**

The term “conclave” comes from the Latin *cum clave*, “with key”: the cardinals are “locked in” until the election to avoid external pressures. The enclosure is guaranteed by several rules:

- Allowed places: Sistine Chapel (voting), *Domus Sanctae Marthae* (lodging), a reserved path between the two buildings.
- Communication ban: electronic devices are collected, signal jammers used, *anti-spy controls* in place.
- Secrecy is also ensured by an oath that includes spiritual sanctions (*automatic excommunication*) and canonical penalties.

### **4. Typical agenda of the conclave**

1. “*Pro eligendo Pontifice*” Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica on the morning of the entry into the conclave.
2. Procession in the Sistine Chapel reciting the *Veni Creator Spiritus*.
3. Individual oath of the cardinals, pronounced before the Gospel book.
4. *Extra omnes!* (“Everyone out!”): the Master of Pontifical Liturgical Celebrations dismisses those not entitled to stay.
5. First (optional) vote on the afternoon of the entry day.
6. Two daily votes (morning and afternoon) followed by the scrutiny (counting).

### **5. Voting procedure**

Each round follows four steps:

**5.1. *Praescrutinium*.** Distribution and filling out in Latin of the ballot “*Eligo in Summum Pontificem...*”.

**5.2. *Scrutinium*.** Each cardinal, carrying the folded ballot, says: “*Testor Christum Dominum...*”. He deposits the ballot in

the urn.

5.3. **Post-scrutinium.** Three *scrutators* drawn by lot count the ballots, read aloud each name, record it, and perforate the ballot with needle and thread.

5.4. **Burning.** Ballots and notes are burned in a special stove; the colour of the smoke indicates the result.

To be elected, a qualified majority is required, that is, two-thirds of valid votes.

## 6. The smoke: black waiting, white joy

Since 2005, to make the signal unmistakable to the faithful in St. Peter's Square, a chemical reagent is added:

- Black smoke (*fumata nera*): no one elected.

- White smoke (*fumata bianca*): Pope elected; bells also ring.

After the white smoke, it takes another 30 minutes to an hour before the new Pope is announced by the Cardinal Deacon in St. Peter's Square. Shortly after (5 to 15 minutes), the new Pope appears to give the *Urbi et Orbi* blessing.

## 7. "Acceptasne electionem?" – Acceptance and pontifical name

When someone reaches the required threshold, the Dean of the College of Cardinals (or the oldest by order and legal seniority if the Dean is the elected) asks: "*Acceptasne electionem de te canonice factam in Summum Pontificem?*" (Do you accept the canonically made election as Supreme Pontiff?). If the elected consents – *Accepto!* – he is asked: "*Quo nomine vis vocari?*" (By what name do you wish to be called?). Taking the name is an act full of theological and pastoral meanings: it recalls models (Francis of Assisi) or reform intentions (John XXIII).

## 8. Immediately following rites

8.1 *Vesting.*

8.2 *Entry into the Chapel of Tears*, where the new Pope can recollect himself.

8.3 *Obedientia*: the electing cardinals file past for the first act of obedience.

8.4 *Announcement to the world*: the Protodeacon appears on the

central balcony with the famous "*Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum: habemus Papam!*"

8.5 First "*Urbi et Orbi*" blessing of the new Pontiff.

From that moment, he takes possession of the office and formally begins his pontificate, while the coronation with the pallium and the Fisherman's ring takes place at the inauguration Mass (usually the following Sunday).

## **9. Some historical aspects and development of the norms**

1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries: Acclamation by clergy and Roman people. In the absence of stable norms, imperial influence was strong.

1059 – *In nomine Domini*. College of Cardinals. Nicholas II limits lay intervention; official birth of the conclave.

1274 – *Ubi Periculum*. Mandatory enclosure. Gregory X reduces political manoeuvres, introduces seclusion.

1621–1622 – Gregory XV. Systematic secret ballot. Improvement of ballots; two-thirds requirement.

1970 – Paul VI. Age limit of 80 years. Reduces electorate, favouring quicker decisions.

1996 – John Paul II. *Universi Dominici Gregis*. Modern codification of the process, introduces *Domus Sanctae Marthae*.

## **10. Some concrete data of this Conclave**

Living cardinals: 252 (average age: 78.0 years).

Voting cardinals: 134 (135). Cardinal Antonio Cañizares Llovera, Archbishop Emeritus of Valencia, Spain, and Cardinal John Njue, Archbishop Emeritus of Nairobi, Kenya, have announced that they will not be able to participate in the conclave.

Of the 135 voting cardinals, 108 (80%) were appointed by Pope Francis. 22 (16%) were appointed by Pope Benedict XVI. The remaining 5 (4%) were appointed by Pope Saint John Paul II.

Of the 135 voting cardinals, 25 participated as electors in the 2013 Conclave.

Average age of the 134 participating cardinal electors: 70.3 years.

Average years of service as cardinal of the 134 participating cardinal electors: 7.1 years.

Average length of a papacy: about 7.5 years.

Start of the Conclave: May 7, Sistine Chapel.

Voting cardinals in the Conclave: 134. Number of votes required for election is two-thirds, i.e., 89 votes.

Voting schedule: 4 votes per day (2 in the morning, 2 in the afternoon).

After 3 full days (to be defined), voting is suspended for a full day ("to allow a prayer pause, informal discussion among electors, and a brief spiritual exhortation").

Then follow 7 more ballots and another pause up to a full day.

Then 7 more ballots and another pause up to a full day.

Then 7 more ballots and then a pause to evaluate how to proceed.

## **11. Unwritten "internal" dynamics**

Despite the strict legal framework, the choice of the Pope is a spiritual but also a human process influenced by:

- Profiles of candidates ("papabili"): geographic origin, pastoral experience, doctrinal competence.
- Ecclesial currents: curial or pastoral, reformist or conservative, liturgical sensitivities.
- Global agenda : ecumenical relations, inter-religious dialogue, social crises (migrants, climate change).
- Languages and personal networks: cardinals tend to gather by region (the "Latin American" group, "African" group, etc.) and meet informally during meals or "walks" in the Vatican gardens.

## **A spiritual and institutional event together**

The election of a Pope is not a technical step comparable to a corporate assembly. Despite the human dimension, it is a **spiritual act essentially guided by the Holy Spirit.**

The care of minute rules – from sealing the Sistine doors to burning the ballots – shows how the Church has transformed its

long historical experience into a system now perceived as stable and solemn.

Knowing how a Pope is chosen, therefore, is not just curiosity: it is understanding the dynamic between authority, collegiality, and tradition that supports the oldest religious institution still operating worldwide. And, in an age of dizzying changes, that “little smoke” rising from the roof of the Sistine Chapel continues to remind us that centuries-old decisions can still speak to the hearts of billions, inside and outside the Church.

May this knowledge of the data and procedures help us to pray more deeply, as one should pray before every important decision that affects our life.