

Don Bosco and his daily crosses

Don Bosco's life had much suffering but he bore it all with heroic humility and patience. Instead, we would like to talk here about daily crosses, more the passing kind but no less heavy. These are thorns he encountered along the way at every turn, actually thorns that stung his upright conscience and sensitive heart, which could have discouraged anyone less patient than him. We will give just a few examples of annoyances of a mainly financial nature that he had to endure through the fault of others.

Writing a letter from Rome to Fr Michael Rua on 25 April 1876, he said among other things: *"How many things, how many carrozzini completed and still under way. They seem like fairy tales!"* The term *"carrozzini"* is a Piedmontese term Don Bosco employed to indicate the problems caused by others that brought him serious and unexpected burdens, of which he was not the cause but the victim.

Three significant cases

The owner of a steam pasta factory, a certain Luigi Succi from Turin, a man well known for his charitable works, one day asked Don Bosco to lend him his signature in a bank transaction to withdraw 40,000 lira. Since he was a rich man from whom he had received many benefits, Don Bosco gave in. But three days later Succi died, the promissory note expired and Don Bosco sent word to his heirs of their deceased's commitment.

Card. G. Cagliero: "We were at dinner when Fr Rua came in and told Don Bosco that the heirs neither knew nor wanted to know about promissory notes. I was sitting at Don Bosco's side. He was eating his soup and I saw that between one spoonful and another (note that it was the month of January and the refectory had no heating), drops of sweat were falling from

his forehead onto his plate, but he showed no concern and did not interrupt his modest meal.

There was no way of making the heirs see reason, and Don Bosco had to pay for it. It was only after about ten years that he got almost the entire sum secured by his signature back.

Another work of charity also cost him dearly for the harassment it caused him. A certain Giuseppe Rua, from Turin, had invented a device with which to raise the monstrance above the tabernacle in church and then lower it back down onto the altar table, at the same time lowering and then raising the cross. This would have avoided the risks the priest ran when climbing up the ladder to carry out this function. That really seemed a simpler and safer means of exposing the Blessed Sacrament. To encourage him Don Bosco sent the designs to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, recommending the initiative. But the Congregation did not approve the invention and did not even want to return the drawings, on the grounds that such was the practice in such cases. Finally, an exception was made for him to free him from more serious harassment. But Mr Rua, seeing the not inconsiderable loss of his industry, blamed Don Bosco for it, took him to court and demanded that the court oblige him to pay a large indemnity. Fortunately, the magistrate later turned out to be of a very different opinion. But in the meantime, during the long course of the litigation, Don Bosco's suffering was no small matter.

A third harassment originated from Don Bosco's charity. He had devised a special collection of funds in the winter of 1872-1873. That winter was particularly hard given the already serious public financial difficulties. In order to procure means of subsistence for his work in Valdocco, which at the time had about 800 young boarders, Don Bosco wrote a circular letter sent in a sealed envelope to potential contributors, inviting them to buy tickets of ten liras each as alms and raffling off a valuable reproduction of Raphael's Madonna di Foligno.



Crosses adorning the Pinardi chapel

The public authorities saw a violation of the law in this initiative. The law prohibited public lotteries so Don Bosco was sued. When questioned, he protested that the lottery was not gambling but consisted of a simple appeal to civic charity, accompanied by a small token of appreciation. The case dragged on for a long time and only ended in 1875 with the sentence of the Court of Appeal condemning “the priest Sir Don Giovanni Bosco” to a heavy fine for contravening the lottery law. Although there was no doubt that the end, he had set himself was praiseworthy, his good faith could not exempt him from the penalty, the material fact being sufficient to establish the contravention also because “it could have gone well beyond the end he intended”!

This warning drove Don Bosco to a final attempt. He appealed to King Victor Emmanuel II, begging by virtue of a sovereign pardon in favour of his young men on whom the consequences of the sentence would fall. And the Sovereign graciously accepted, granting the pardon. The granting of the pardon fell at a time when Don Bosco was, among other things, fully immersed in expenses for his first expedition of Salesian missionaries to America. But in the meantime, how much trepidation!

Although Don Bosco, for the sake of peace, always tried to avoid litigation in court, he still had to endure it, only sometimes obtaining complete absolution. “*Summum jus summa iniuria*”, said Cicero, meaning that too much rigour in judging is often a great injustice.

The Saint's advice

Don Bosco was so adverse to litigation and quarrels that he wrote in his Spiritual Testament:

“With outsiders it is necessary to tolerate a great deal, and even endure harm rather than come to arguments.

With the civil and ecclesiastical authorities put up with as

much as you can honestly, but never end up in the secular court. Since in spite of sacrifices and all good will one must sometimes have to endure legal suits and disputes, I advise and recommend that the dispute be referred to one or two arbitrators with full powers, and that the dispute be referred to any opinion of theirs.

In this way consciences are saved and affairs which are ordinarily very long and costly and in which it is difficult to maintain peace and Christian charity are brought to an end."

Francis de Sales. The Da mihi animas (3/8)

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THE "DA MIHI ANIMAS" OF SAN FRANCESCO DI SALES (3/8)

First of all, we need to clarify what is meant by pastoral zeal:

"Zeal does not only mean commitment, being busy: it expresses an all-encompassing orientation, the anxiety and almost the torment of bringing every person to salvation, at all costs, by all means, through a tireless search for the least and most pastorally abandoned."

Often, when one hears talk of pastoral zeal, figures come to mind who are characterised by great activity, generous in spending themselves for others, moved by such charity that sometimes they do not even have "time to eat". Francis was one

of these, completely devoted to the good of souls in his diocese and beyond. However, through his example he gives us a further message: his way of living the *da mihi animas* springs from the care he took of his interior life, his prayer, his unreserved surrender to God.

Therefore, these are the two sides of his zeal that we want to draw out from his life and writings.

The Council of Trent had just ended when Francis was born. On the pastoral level, it called the bishops to a more attentive and generous care of their dioceses. This care came first of all from being resident in the diocese, being among the people, instructing the clergy by establishing seminaries, frequent visits to parishes, training parish priests, spreading the Catechism as an instrument of evangelisation for the youngest and not only the youngest ...; a whole series of measures to make bishops and priests aware of their identity as pastors in the care of souls.

Francis took these reminders seriously to the point of becoming, together with St Charles Borromeo, the model of the **pastor bishop**, totally dedicated to his people, as he himself said, recalling his episcopal consecration:

“On that day God took me from myself to take me for himself and thus give me to the people, meaning that he had transformed me from what I was for me into what I should be for them.”

Francis, a priest for nine years and bishop for twenty, lived under the banner of this total self-gift to God and his brothers and sisters. At the end of 1593, a few days after his ordination to the priesthood, he delivered a famous address, known as a harangue for its content and the vigour with which it was delivered.

The following year, he offered himself as a “missionary” in the Chablais and set off armed with a strong rope: “Prayer, almsgiving and fasting are the three parts that make up the

rope that the enemy breaks with difficulty. With divine grace, we will try to bind this enemy with it."

He preached in the church of St Hippolytus, Thonon, after the Protestant service.

His apostolate in the Chablais at the beginning was one of contact with the people: he smiled, spoke to them, greeted them, stopped and inquired... convinced that the walls of mistrust can only be broken down with relationships of friendship and empathy. If he could make himself loved, everything would be easier and simpler.

"I am dead tired," he wrote to his bishop, but he did not give up.

He loved to pray **the Rosary** every day, even late at night, and when he feared falling asleep from tiredness he said it standing or walking.

Francis' missionary experience in the Chablais was finally interrupted towards the end of 1601 to go to Paris, where he had to deal with the problems of the diocese and remained there for nine long months.

Due to political commitments and friendship with many people he frequented the court and it was there that Francis discovered many men and women eager to walk towards the Lord. It was here that the idea of a text was born that would summarise the principles of the interior life in a concise and practical form and facilitate its application to all social classes. And so from this year the Saint began to put together the first materials that would later contribute to the composition of the *Introduction to the Devout Life*.

On his return from Paris he learned the news of the death of his dear bishop. He prepared for his episcopal consecration with two weeks of silence and prayer.

He immediately felt the weight of the new task:

"You cannot believe how much I feel beset and burdened by this

great and difficult office.”

In summary, Francis’ zeal in the 20 years he would spend as bishop was manifested above all in these areas:

He visited parishes and monasteries to get to know his diocese: he gradually discovered its flaws and limitations, including serious ones, as well as the beauty, generosity and good heart of so many people. To visit the parishes mean he was absent from Annecy for a long time: “I will leave here in ten days and continue my pastoral visit for five whole months in the high mountains, where the people await me with great affection.” “every evening when I retire, I cannot move either body or mind so tired am I all over; and by morning I am more cheerful than ever.”

Above all, he listened to his priests and encouraged them to live their vocation faithfully.

The apostolate of the pen: Francis’ *Opera Omnia* consists of 27 powerful volumes... One wonders how a man could write so much. How much effort, how much time stolen from sleep, from rest! All the pages that came from his pen are the consequence of his passion for souls, of his great desire to bring the Lord to everyone he met, no one excluded.

The foundation of the Order of the Visitation

A new reality was born in 1610: three women (Baroness de Chantal, Jacqueline Favre and Charlotte de Bréhard) gave life to a new form of religious life made up exclusively of prayer and charity. They were inspired by the Gospel picture of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary to her cousin Elizabeth.

The other aspect of his zeal was **the care he gave to his spiritual life.**

Cardinal Charles Borromeo wrote in a letter to the clergy:

“Do you look after souls? Do not neglect self-care because this and do not give yourself to others to the point where there is nothing left of you for yourself.”

He returned home exhausted and in need of “readjusting my poor spirit. I propose doing a complete overhaul of myself and putting all the pieces of my heart back in place.”

“On my return from the visit, when I wanted to take a good look at my soul, I felt sorry for it: I found it so thin and shattered that it looked like death. No wonder! For four or five months it had hardly had a moment to breathe. I will stay close to it for the coming winter and try to treat it well.”



S. Francis de Sales and St Francisca de Chantal. Stained-glass window, Church of St. Maurice de Thorens, France

In the *Introduction* he wrote:

“There is no clock, however good, but must be continually wound up; and moreover, during the course of each year it will need taking to pieces, to cleanse away the rust which clogs it, to straighten bent works, and renew such as are worn.

Even so, any one who really cares for his heart’s devotion will wind it up to God night and morning, and examine into its condition, correcting and improving it; and at least once a year he will take the works to pieces and examine them carefully; – I mean his affections and passions, – so as to repair whatever may be amiss.”

Lent was about to begin and he wrote this meaningful note to a friend:

“I am going to dedicate this Lent to observing the obligation of residence in my cathedral and to tidying up my soul a little, which is cracked from the great strains to which it has been subjected. It is like a broken clock: one has to take it apart, piece by piece, and, after having cleaned and oiled it well, put it back together again so that it strikes the right time.”

Francis’ activity went hand in hand with care for his inner

life; this is a great message for us today, to avoid becoming dry and therefore useless branches!

To conclude:

“I have sacrificed my life and my soul to God and his Church: what does it matter if I have to inconvenience myself when it is a matter of procuring some benefit for the salvation of souls?”

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St. Francis de Sales. Friendship (2/8)

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ST. FRANCIS DE SALES AND FRIENDSHIP (2/8)

Having met Francis de Sales through the story of his life, let us look at the beauty of his heart and present some of his virtues with the aim of awakening the desire in many people to explore the rich personality of this saint.

The first snapshot, the one that immediately fascinates those who approach Francis de Sales, is friendship! It is the calling card with which he presents himself.

There is an episode when Francis was in his twenties that few people know about: after ten years of study in Paris, the time had come to return to Savoy, home, to Annecy. Four of his companions accompanied him all the way to Lyon and bid him farewell in tears.

This helps us to understand and savour what Francis wrote towards the end of his life, giving us a rare snapshot of his heart:

“There are no souls in the world who love more warmly, more tenderly and I would say more completely and lovingly than I since it has pleased God to make my heart thus. But just the same I love independent, vigorous souls that are not effeminate; since such great tenderness clouds the heart, worries it and distracts it from loving prayer to God, it prevents complete resignation and perfect death of self-love. What is not God is nothing to us.”

And to a woman he spoke of his thirst for friendship:

“I must tell you these few words in confidence: there is no man in the world whose heart is more tender and more thirsty for friendship than mine, or who feels separations more painfully than I do.”



Antoine FAVRE – Portrait, private collection

Source: Wikipedia

From the hundreds of recipients of his letters, I have chosen three, writing to whom Francis highlights the characteristics of Salesian friendship, as he lived it and which he proposes to us today. The first great friend we meet is his fellow citizen **Antoine Favre**. Francis, a brilliant law graduate, had a great desire to meet and earn the esteem of this luminary.

In one of his first letters we find an expression which sounds like a kind of oath:

“This gift (friendship), so appreciable even for its rarity, is truly priceless and all the more dear to me in that it

could never have been due to my own merits. The ardent desire to diligently cultivate all friendships will always live in my breast!"

The first characteristic of friendship is communication, the giving of news, the sharing of moods.

Francis' youngest sister, Jeanne, was born at the beginning of December 1593, and he promptly told his friend:

"I learn that my dearest mother, who is in her forty-second year, will soon give birth to her thirteenth child. I am going quickly to her, knowing that she rejoices greatly at my presence."

We are only a few days away from his ordination to the priesthood and Francis confides to his friend:

"You, honourable friend, seem to me to be the only one able to understand the turmoil of my mind since you deal with divine things with so much respect and so much veneration that you can easily judge how dangerous and fearful it is to preside at their celebration and how difficult it would be to celebrate them with the dignity they deserve."

Not even a year after ordination, we find Francis as a "missionary" in the Chablais: he communicates his fatigue and bitterness to his friend:

"Today I begin preaching Advent to four or five people: all the others are maliciously ignorant of the meaning of the word Advent."

A few months later he joyfully gave him news of his first apostolic successes:

"At last the first ears of corn are beginning to ripen!"

Another great friend of Francis was **Giovenale Ancina**: The two met in Rome (1599); they would both be consecrated bishops a few years later. Francis wrote several letters to him; in one he begged his friend, the Bishop of Saluzzo, to keep him

“closely united with him in his heart and also deign to often give me the advice and reminders that the Holy Spirit will inspire in you.”

Among the friends he met in Paris, his friendship with the famous Fr Peter de Bérulle, whom he met at Madame Acarie's group, stands out. Francis wrote to him a few days after his episcopal consecration:

“I have been a consecrated bishop since the 8th of this month, the day of Our Lady. This prompts me to beg you to help me all the more warmly with your prayers. There is no remedy: we will always need to be washing our feet, since we are walking in dust. May our good God grant us the grace to live and die in his service.”

Another great friend of Francis was **Vincent de Paul**. A friendship was born between them that continued beyond the death of the founder of the Visitation, as Vincent took the Order to heart and became its reference point until the end of his days (1660). Vincent always remained grateful to the holy bishop from whom he had received salutary reproaches about his impetuous and touchy character. He treasured this and little by little corrected himself and, thinking of his friend, did not hesitate to describe him as “The man who best reproduced the Son of God living on earth.”

Reading these letters we discover some of the qualities that must govern true friendship: communication, prayer and service (forgiveness, correction ...).

We now come across many men and women to whom Francis addresses letters of spiritual friendship. Some examples:

To Madame de la Fléchère he writes:

“Be patient with everyone, but mainly with yourself. I mean to say that you must not be upset by your imperfections and always have the courage to recover promptly.”



St. Vincent de Paul – Founder of the Congregation of the Mission (Lazarists)

Portrait, Simon François de Tours; Source: Wikipedia

To Madame de Charmoisy he writes:

“You must be careful to begin gently, and from time to time take a look at your heart to see if it has kept sweet. If it has not kept so, soften it before doing anything.”

These letters are a **treatise on friendship**, not because they speak of friendship but because the writer lives a relationship of friendship, knows how to create a climate and a style so that it is perceived and bears good fruit in life.

The same applies to the correspondence with **his daughters, the Visitandines**.

To Mother Favre, who felt the weight of her office, he wrote:

“It is necessary to arm ourselves with a courageous humility and to reject all temptations of discouragement in the holy confidence we have in God. Since this office has been imposed on you by the will of those whom you must obey, God will place Himself at your right hand and carry it with you, or rather, He will carry it, but you will carry it too.”

To Mother de Brécharde he wrote:

“He who can maintain meekness amid pain and weariness, and peace amid worry and over-whelming cares, is well nigh perfect. Perfect evenness of temper, true gentleness and sweetness of heart, are more rare than perfect chastity, but they are so much the more to be cultivated. I commend them to you, my dearest daughter, because upon these, like the oil of a lamp, depends the flame of good example. Nothing is so edifying as a loving good temper.”



Saint Jeanne François FRÉMIOT DE CHANTAL, co-founder of the Order of the Visitation of Saint Mary

Author unknown, Monastery of the Visitation of Mary in Toledo, Ohio (USA); Source: Wikipedia

Among the various Founding Mothers, a special place belongs to the Foundress, **Jane Frances de Chantal**, to whom Francis wrote from the beginning:

“Believe firmly that I have a living and extraordinary desire to serve your spirit with all the capacity of my strength. Take advantage of my affection and use all that God has given me for the service of your spirit. Here I am all yours.”

And he declared to her:

“I love this love. It is strong, expansive, without measure or reserve, but sweet, strong, most pure and most tranquil; in a word, it is a love that lives only in God. God, who sees all the folds of my heart, knows that there is nothing in it that is not for Him and according to Him, without whom I want to be nothing to anyone.”

This God whom Francis and Jane intend to serve is always present, is the guarantee that their love would always be consecration to Him alone:

“I would like to be able to express to you the feeling that I had of our dear unity today, as I took communion, because it was a great, perfect, sweet, powerful feeling, such that it could almost be called a vow, a consecration.”

“Who could have fused two spirits so perfectly that they were no more than one indivisible and inseparable spirit, if not He who is unity by essence? [...]. Thousands of times each day my heart is close to you with thousands of good wishes which it presents to God for your consolation.”

“The holy unity that God has wrought is stronger than all separations, and distance cannot harm it in the least. So may God always bless us with his holy love. He has made us one heart in spirit and in life.”

I end with a wish, the one Francis wrote to one of the first

Visitandines, Jacqueline Favre:

“How is your poor and beloved heart? Is it always courageous, and careful to avoid the surprises of sadness? Please do not torment it, not even when it has played some little nasty trick on you, but gently take it back and guide it on its way. This heart will become a great heart, made after God’s own heart.”

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Artemides ZATTI – Saint

LIFE AND WORKS

Saint Artemides Zatti was born in Boretto (Reggio Emilia) on 12 October 1880. He experienced the harshness of sacrifice at an early age, so much so that at nine years old he was already earning his living as a hired hand. Forced by poverty, early in 1897 (Artemide was then 17 years old) the Zatti family emigrated to Argentina and settled in Bahía Blanca.

Young Artemides immediately started working, first in a hotel and then in a brick factory. He started attending the parish run by the Salesians. The parish priest at the time was Fr Carlo Cavalli, a pious man of extraordinary kindness. Artemis found a spiritual director in him and the parish priest found that Artemides was an excellent co-worker. It did not take long for him to show a leaning to Salesian life. He

was 20 years old when he left for the aspirantate in Bernal. Those were very hard years for Artemides, who was ahead of his companions in age but behind them in terms of the few studies he had done. He overcame all difficulties, however, thanks to his tenacious will, keen intelligence and solid piety.

While assisting a young priest with tuberculosis he unfortunately contracted the disease. Fr Cavalli's fatherly interest in him, following him from afar, meant that the Salesian House at Viedma was chosen for him, where there was a more suitable climate and above all a missionary hospital with a good Salesian nurse who in practice acted as the "doctor" there: Father Evasio Garrone. The latter immediately realised the serious state of the young man's health and at the same time sensed his uncommon virtues. He invited Artemides to pray to Mary Help of Christians to be cured, but also suggested making a promise: "If she cures you, you will devote your whole life to these sick people. " Artemides willingly made this promise and was mysteriously cured. He accepted the not inconsiderable pain of renouncing the priesthood (because of the illness he had contracted) humbly and docilely. Neither then nor later was any lament for this unattained goal ever voiced by him.

He made his First Profession as a coadjutor brother on 11 January 1908 and his Perpetual Profession on 18 February 1911. In keeping with his promise to Our Lady, he immediately and totally consecrated himself to the hospital, initially taking care of the adjoining pharmacy after he had obtained a "qualified in pharmacy" certificate. When Father Garrone died in 1913, all responsibility for the hospital fell on his shoulders. In fact, he became its vice-director, administrator, an expert nurse respected by all the sick and by the doctors themselves, who gradually gave him more and more freedom of action. Throughout his life, the hospital was the place where he exercised his virtue, day after day, to a heroic degree.



His service was not limited to the hospital, but extended to the entire city, or rather to the two towns on the banks of the Rio Negro: Viedma and Patagones. He usually went out with his white coat and his bag containing the most common medicines. One hand on the handlebar and the other with the rosary. He preferred poor families, but was also called upon by the rich. In case of need, he moved at all hours of the day and night, whatever the weather. He did not stay in the city centre, but also went to the hovels in the suburbs. He did everything for free, and if he received anything, it went to the hospital.

Saint Artemides Zatti loved his patients in a truly moving way. He saw Jesus himself in them. He was always respectful to the doctors and hospital owners. But the situation was not always easy, both because of the some of their characters and because of the disagreements that could arise between the legal managers and himself. However, he was able to win them all over and his balanced attitude managed to resolve even the most delicate situations. Only a profound self-mastery could make it possible for him to triumph over the stress and easily shifting timetable.

He was an edifying witness of faithfulness to common life. It amazed everyone how this holy religious, while so caught up with his many commitments at the hospital, could at the same time be the exemplary representative of regular life. It was he who rang the bell, it was he who there before all the other confreres for community events. Faithful to the Salesian spirit and to the motto "work and temperance" bequeathed by Don Bosco to his sons, he carried out his prodigious activity with habitual readiness of spirit, a spirit of sacrifice especially during night duty, with absolute detachment from any personal satisfaction, never taking holidays or rest. As a good Salesian, he knew how to make cheerfulness a component of his holiness. He was ever

cheerful and smiling: this is how all the photos that have reached us portray him. He could relate easily with people, was clearly empathetic, always happy to entertain lowly individuals. But he was above all a man of God. He radiated it. One of the hospital doctors said, "When I saw Bro. Zatti, my disbelief wavered.". Another said, "I have believed in God ever since I met Bro. Zatti."

In 1950, Bro. Zatti fell from a ladder and it was after this accident that cancer symptoms manifested themselves. He clearly diagnosed them himself. However, he continued to carry out his mission for another year, heroically accepting his sufferings, and passed away on 15 March 1951 still fully conscious, surrounded by the affection and gratitude of a population that from that moment on began to invoke him as an intercessor with God. All the inhabitants of Viedma and Patagones flocked to his funeral in an unprecedented procession.

His reputation for holiness quickly spread and his tomb began to be much venerated. Even today, when people go to the cemetery for funerals, they always pass by to visit Artemides Zatti's tomb. Beatified by St John Paul II on 14 April 2002, Saint Artemide Zatti was the first non-martyr Salesian Brother to be raised to the honours of the altars.

HIS MESSAGE

The House Chronicle at the Salesian College in Viedma recalls that on 15 March 1951 the bell rang in the morning as usual, but announced the flight to heaven of Brother Artemides Zatti. As the Chronicle put it prophetically, "One less brother in the house and one more saint in heaven."

Artemides' canonisation is a gift of grace that the Lord gives us through this confrere, a Salesian Brother who lived his life in the family spirit typical of the Salesian charism, embodying fraternity towards his confreres and the community,

and closeness to the poor and the sick and anyone who crossed his path.

Artemides Zatti's life stages: childhood and early youth in Italy in Boretto; the emigration of the family and residence in Bahía Blanca (Argentina); his Salesian aspirantate in Bernal; his illness and the move to Viedma, which was the home where his heart truly lay; his formation and religious profession as a Salesian Brother; his mission for 40 years first at the San José Hospital and then at the Quinta San Isidro; his final years and death experienced as an encounter with the Lord of life, highlighting his heroic practice of virtue and the purifying and transforming action of the Holy Spirit, the author of all holiness.

Saint Artemides Zatti is a model, intercessor and companion of Christian life, close to each of us. Indeed, his life presents him to us as someone who experienced the daily toil of existence with its successes and failures. It is enough to recall the separation from his native country to emigrate to Argentina; the tuberculosis that broke in like a hurricane in his young life, shattering every dream and every prospect for the future; seeing the hospital he had built with so many sacrifices and which had become a sanctuary of God's merciful love, later demolished. But Zatti always found the strength in the Lord to get back up and continue on his way.

The testimony of Artemides Zatti enlightens us, attracts us and also challenges us, because he is a word of God incarnated in history and close to us. He transformed life into a gift, working with generosity and intelligence, overcoming difficulties of all kinds with his unwavering trust in divine Providence. The lesson of faith, hope and charity that he leaves us becomes, if properly known and motivated, a courageous work of safeguarding and promoting the most authentic human and Christian values.



What stands out above all in the parable of Artemides Zatti's life is the experience of God's unconditional and gratuitous love. First and foremost, it is not the works he performed, but the amazement of discovering himself loved and his faith in this providential love throughout each stage of his life. It was from this lived certainty that the totality of giving himself to his neighbour for the love of God flowed. The love he received from the Lord was the power that transformed his life, expanded his heart and predisposed him to love. With the same Spirit, the Spirit of holiness, and the love that heals and transforms us, even as a boy he made choices and performed acts of love in every situation and with every brother and sister he met, because he felt loved and had the strength to love:

- while still a teenager in Italy he experienced the hardships of poverty and work, but laid the foundations for a solid Christian life, giving the first proofs of his generous charity;

- When he emigrated with his family to Argentina, he knew how to preserve his faith and make it grow, resisting an often immoral and anti-Christian environment and maturing, thanks to the encounter with the Salesians and the spiritual accompaniment of Father Carlo Cavalli, in his aspiration to the priesthood. He was ready to return to the school benches with twelve-year-old boys although he was already twenty;

- he readily offered to assist a priest suffering from tuberculosis and contracted the disease, without uttering a word of complaint or recrimination, but experiencing his illness as a time of trial and purification, bearing its consequences with fortitude and serenity;

- cured in an extraordinary way through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, and after making a promise to dedicate his life to the sick and the poor, he generously

accepted renouncing the priesthood and dedicated himself with all his strength to his new mission as a lay Salesian;

– He lived the ordinary rhythm of his days in an extraordinary way: faithful and edifying practice of religious life in joyful fraternity; sacrificial service at all hours and with all the humblest of services to the sick and the poor; continuous struggle against poverty in the search for resources and benefactors to meet debts, trusting exclusively in Providence; ready availability for all human misfortunes that sought his intervention; resistance to every difficulty and acceptance of every adverse case; self-mastery and joyful and optimistic serenity that communicated itself to all those who approached him.

Seventy-one years of this life before God and before human beings: a life delivered joyfully and faithfully to the end, bearing witness to a holiness that is accessible and within the reach of all, as taught by St Francis de Sales and Don Bosco: not an impassable goal, separated from everyday life, but embodied in everyday life, in the hospital wards, on a bicycle through the streets of Viedma, in the travails of daily life to meet demands and needs of all kinds, doing everyday things in a spirit of service, with love and without spectacle, without claiming anything, with the joy of giving, enthusiastically embracing the vocation of a lay Salesian and becoming a shining reflection of the Lord.

International volunteer work in Benediktbeuern

Don Bosco Volunteers: the commitment of young people for a better future

For more than 20 years the German Salesian Province of Don Bosco has been involved in the field of youth volunteering. Through the Don Bosco Volunteers programme the Salesians in Germany offer around 90 young people each year an educational and life experience in Salesian houses in the Province and in various countries around the world.

For many young Germans it is customary, once they have completed their school education, to devote a year of their lives to social work. The profile of the Salesians for many of these young Germans is a source of inspiration when choosing an organisation to accompany them during this experience. In spite of the secularisation of German society and a constant loss of faithful by the Church in recent years, many young people knock on the Salesians' door with the clear intention of helping their neighbour and making a small contribution to a better world. These young people find a form of faith and an example of life in the figure of Don Bosco.

Not all of those who apply for admission to the volunteer programme at the relevant offices of the Province in Benediktbeuern and Bonn have had experience in youth groups connected with the Church and especially with the Salesians during their lives. Some of them are not baptised, but recognise a possibility for personal growth in the Salesian educational offer, based on fundamental values for their own development. That is why so many young people begin a volunteer experience with the Don Bosco Volunteers programme every year: during training weekends, the young people not only learn useful information about the projects, but also come face to face with the Salesian preventive system and spirituality, thus preparing themselves for the time they will

put into the service of other young people.



The volunteers are accompanied during their experience by a team of coordinators who look after not only the organisational aspects, but above all of the support before, during and after the volunteering experience. This is because the volunteer year does not end on the last day of service at the host Salesian home, but continues for life. This year in the service of others represents a foundation of values that has a strong impact on the future development of the volunteers. Don Bosco educated young people in order to make them upright citizens and good Christians: the Don Bosco Volunteers programme is inspired by this fundamental principle of Salesian pedagogy and seeks to create the basis for a better society, in which Christian values once again characterise our lives.

The German Province provides opportunities for young people to meet at all stages of the volunteering experience: orientation meetings, online information offers, training courses, parties and annual experience exchange meetings are basic activities on which the success of the Don Bosco Volunteers programme is built.

A co-ordination team consisting of co-workers from the Aktionszentrum Benediktbeuern youth training centre and the mission office in Bonn, supported by the provincial economist Fr. Stefan Stöhr and the youth ministry delegate, Fr. Johannes Kaufmann, manages and directs all activities, developing the programme in all its components.

The volunteer experience begins with the application to join the programme: young people taking part in the national programme start their service in September and take part in 25 training days during the volunteer year. For volunteers intending to go abroad, the path is somewhat longer: after an

orientation meeting in the autumn, selections are made and candidates receive information from former volunteers who have already taken part in the programme in the past. The training phase begins in the first months of the year and includes a total of 12 days of preparation, during which volunteers receive information on Don Bosco's pedagogy, the work of the Salesians in the world, important topics such as intercultural communication and precautions to be taken in case of emergency during the experience abroad. In July, the volunteers receive a blessing and a Don Bosco medal as a symbol of belonging to the Salesian Family.

The departure of the young people is planned for September, and towards the middle of the service, reflection meetings are offered in the various regions where the volunteers work, held by the coordination team of the German Province. The experience ends with a concluding seminar, shortly after returning from the service abroad, in which the foundations are laid for a future commitment to the Salesian Family.

On an annual basis, two meetings are organised in the Province for all those who have taken part in the programme since the start of activities in the 1990s. The Province's coordination team takes care of all organisational aspects, including: searching for Salesian houses interested in collaborating in the field of volunteering; financing activities through ministerial and European funds; support in the event of emergencies; organising the health insurance aspects of the volunteers; communicating with the families of the volunteers.



More than a thousand young people have already taken part in the Don Bosco Volunteers programme in Germany and abroad over the past 25 years. In a study carried out a few months ago by the German Province, in which around 180 former volunteers took part, a constant commitment to social work on the part of the young people was observed even many years after the

volunteering experience. Particularly evident is the respondents' focus on issues such as social injustice, racism, ecology and sustainable development. This study has demonstrated the value of this programme, not only in terms of the immediate help that volunteers can give to their host communities during their year of service, but also in terms of the positive effects that can be registered in the long term, once they have completed their academic studies or embarked on their professional path.

An important aspect of the Don Bosco Volunteers programme is its inclusion in national and European programmes, such as the European Commission's European Solidarity Corps, the national volunteer programmes of the Ministry for Family and Youth or the weltwärts programme of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation, so that the Salesians' training offerings can be made more visible to institutions.

Constant quality controls carried out by competent associations certify the efficiency and transparency of the training offer of the Don Bosco Volunteers programme on a biannual basis. One aspect of these quality controls often concerns the cooperation between our competent offices and the host structures in Germany and in different countries around the world. This detail distinguishes the Salesian offer from many other private volunteer agencies, which cooperate with various organisations with the most varied profiles. Our volunteers work exclusively in Salesian facilities and are specially prepared for this life experience. It does not matter whether a volunteer is employed in a small village in southern India or in a European metropolis. There is something that unites all these young people and makes them feel at home during their experience: Don Bosco with his presence in the host communities offers them a point of reference in everyday life and gives them comfort and protection in the most difficult moments.

Of course, it would be too easy to say that a volunteer

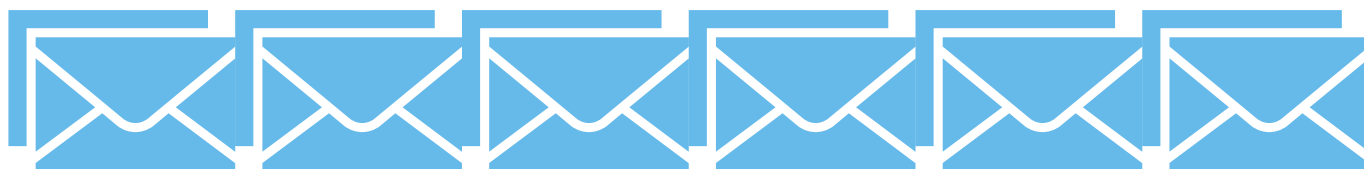
experience always goes smoothly or without problems: the acclimatisation phase in particular can create various integration problems for the volunteers. But it is precisely in these situations that growth can be observed in young people, who learn to know themselves, their limits and their resources better. The accompaniment provided by the Salesian host communities and the staff of the German Provincial coordination centres is intended to turn even the most difficult phases of this journey into opportunities for reflection and personal growth.

Many challenges await us in the future: the last two years have shown us that the world is changing and the fear that war will wipe out the prospect of a fairer society seems to be growing in the new generations. The Don Bosco Volunteers programme seeks to be a glimmer of light and a source of hope, so that our young people can build a better future for our planet through their commitment.

Francesco BAGIOLINI
Benediktbeuern, Germany

Photo gallery International volunteer work in Benediktbeuern

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In memoriam. Fr Davide FACCHINELLO, sdb

A life spent for others. Fr Davide FACCHINELLO, sdb

Born in the thousand-year-old city of Treviso on 21 May 1974, Davide was baptised in the parish church of Loria (Treviso) where his family lived. He attended primary school in his birthplace and continued as a boarder in the two-year graphics school at the San Giorgio Institute in Venice, where he met the Salesians. He began a live-in experience in the Salesian Community in Mogliano Veneto, continuing his graphic design studies in Noventa Padovana where he received his qualifications. This experience led him to learn about the activities of the parish oratory in Mogliano, summer leadership initiatives, and formation groups, which would become catalysts for his response to a divine call, entering the novitiate in 1993. His first pastoral destination was in the Mogliano Veneto Astori house as Catechist for middle school, where he remained until 2011. He then received a new destination to the House at Este as vice-rector of the community and pastoral animator among the students at the Job Training Centre. This gave him a heartfelt desire for pastoral experience in mission lands, and he put himself at the disposal of the Salesian Congregation for this purpose. As his superiors indicated Peru as his destination, he immediately began to study Spanish, a language he continued to improve in while in the mission, at the same time as he immersed himself in the local culture.



Since his arrival in Peru in 2017, after a period of acclimatisation he was sent to the missionary community at Monte Salvado, in the region of Cusco. He started as assistant parish priest of Mary Help of Christians Parish, Quebrada Honda, in the Yanatile Valley, deep in the jungle where the Salesians accompany the Andean missions. After almost two years, he was appointed parish priest there on 12 April 2019.

As soon as he arrived, he dedicated himself to getting to know the people and putting himself at their pastoral service, being faithful to the instructions of the Archdiocese of Cusco and in collaboration with the local community. Since it was a missionary parish, he periodically visited all seventy-three communities, travelled to the most remote villages and reached the most humble and remote homes in a vast region. Eager to get even closer to the souls he served, he set about learning the Quechua language.

He initiated assistance and promotion projects, such as the parish canteen and a comprehensive psychological assistance programme, and, as a good Salesian, he gave encouragement to many oratories in the various villages. He intensely developed the renewal of catechesis along the lines of the RCIA, in harmony with the Province's Educative and Pastoral Project. His commitment to the local Church was so great that he was appointed Dean of the region by the Archbishop of Cuzco. Among the testimonies of the people, the special care he had for some people (the poorest of the poor) stands out. David accompanied and promoted them in a special and very discreet way.

The testimonies received confirm that he was kind and attentive to the confreres in the community, an exemplary religious and a hard-working and committed apostle. From the very first moment he won the hearts of everyone with his kindness and serene cheerfulness; he was able to win the esteem and trust of people: companions, co-workers,

parishioners and young people, thanks to his optimism, good sense, prudence and availability.

In addition to all this apostolic work, Davide was a much loved confrere: he loved being in the Salesian community, the confreres appreciated his good humour and his ability to create close bonds.

The young people at Monte Salvado (the school for young people from the jungle who attend the Salesian missionary community) loved him very much, appreciated the fact that he was happy to spend time with them during the break, and were impressed by his enthusiasm when he taught catechesis: his was a true sacrament of presence.

His earthly journey ended there: after sharing the feast of Mary Help of Christians with the parish community on 24 May 2022, he left for heaven in a car accident on his return around midnight. His final celebration of Our Lady would accompany him to Paradise.

Two fundamental traits that Don Bosco saw in St Francis de Sales – apostolic charity and loving-kindness – are those he most embodied. It is almost a reflection of what one of his countrymen, Fr Antonio Cojazzi, used to say: “Cheerful face, heart in hand, there goes the Salesian.”



We hope that he will obtain many holy vocations for us from Heaven to accompany young people on their earthly journey. In the meantime, let us pray for him.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and may perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace.

St Francis de Sales. Life (1/8)

1. The early years

Francis was born in the family castle at [Thorens](#) (about 20 km from Annecy). He was seven weeks old and “it was a miracle that, in such a dangerous birth, his mother had not lost her life”. He was the eldest son followed by seven brothers and sisters. His mother, Françoise de Sionnaz, was just 15 years old while his father, Monsieur de Boisy, was 43! In those days, marriage among aristocrats was an opportunity to climb the social ladder (to gain noble titles, lands, castles...). The rest, including love, came later!



Church of St. Maurice de Thorens, France

He was baptised in the small [church of St Maurice in Thorens](#). Years later, Francis chose that humble little church for his episcopal consecration (8 December 1602).

Francis spent his early years with his three cousins in the same castle: he played with them, amused himself and contemplated the splendid nature that surrounded him. It became the great book from which he would draw a thousand examples for his own books. The education he received from his parents was clearly Catholic. ‘One must always think of God and be a man of God,’ his father said, and Francis would

treasure this advice. His parents regularly attended the parish and treated their employees fairly. They gave generously to them when needed. Francis' earliest memories were not only of the beauty of that wonderful nature, but also of the destruction and death caused by fratricidal wars in the name of the Gospel.

The time to go to school arrived: Francis left home and went to boarding school, first at [La Roche](#) for about two years and then for three years at [Annecy](#) in the company of his cousins. This time was marked by some important facts:

- he received his First Communion and Confirmation in the [church of St Dominique \(present-day Church of St Maurice\)](#) and from then on would frequently receive communion.

- he enrolled in the confraternity of the Rosary and from then on made a habit of saying the rosary daily.

- He asked to receive the tonsure: his father granted him permission, since this step did not imply the start of a clerical career at the time.

Francis was a normal, studious, obedient lad with a characteristic trait: "you never saw him make fun of anyone!"

By this time, [Savoy](#) had taught him all he could. And so in 1578, with his inseparable cousins and under the watchful eye of his tutor Déage, Francis left for [Paris](#) where he was to remain for ten years as a pupil at the [Clermont college](#) run by the Jesuits.

2. Ten significant years: 1578-1588

The timetable at the College was strict and the religious precepts were also demanding. During these years Francis studied Latin, Greek, Hebrew, familiarised himself with the classics and perfected his French. He had excellent teachers.

In his spare time, he frequented high-ranking circles, had free access to the Court, excelled in skills particular to the nobility, and took some theology courses at the [Sorbonne](#). In particular he listened to [Fr Génébrard's](#) Commentary on the

Song of Songs and was deeply moved by it: he discovered the passion of God for humanity in this allegory of the love of a man for a woman. He felt loved by God! But at the same time the idea of being excluded from this love grew in his thinking. He felt he was damned! He experienced a time of crisis and for six weeks did not sleep or eat. He wept and fell ill. He only emerged from this state by entrusting himself to Our Lady in the [church of St-Etienne-des-Grès](#) with an act of heroic abandonment to God's mercy and goodness. He said a Salve Regina and the temptation vanished.

Finally, having completed his final exams, he was able to leave Paris, though not without regret. What a joy it was for Francis to return home and re-embrace his parents, his little brothers and sisters who had meanwhile arrived to cheer up the family.

All for only a few months, because he had to leave once more to achieve his father's dream: to become a great lawyer.

3. The Padua years: 1588-1591

These were the decisive years for Francis on a human, cultural and spiritual level.

[Padua](#) was the capital of the Italian Renaissance with thousands of students coming from all over Europe: the universities were home to the most famous teachers, the best spirits of the time.

Here Francis studied law and at the same time developed his theological studies, read the Church Fathers, and placed himself in the hands of a wise spiritual director, Jesuit [Father Possevino](#). He came close to death's door, probably due to typhoid fever, received the sacraments and made a will: 'When I die, give my body to the medical students'. Such was the fervour for study and thirst for knowledge of the human body that medical students, short of corpses, would go to the cemetery to dig them up!

This testament of Francis is important because it speaks of a sensitivity he would retain for the rest of his life, for culture and the scientific innovations typical of the

Renaissance.

He recovered, completed his studies brilliantly on 5 September 1591 and left Padua having “graduated with full marks *in utroque*” (civil and canon law). His father was proud of him.

4. Towards the priesthood: 1593

There were other dreams in Francis’ heart, far removed from his father’s, but how to tell him? Monsieur de Boisy placed all his hopes in Francis!

Francis was appointed [Provost](#) of [Annecy Cathedral](#). On the strength of this honorary title, he met with his father to tell him of his intention to become a priest. It was a harsh and understandable confrontation.

“I thought and hoped that you would be the staff of my old age and the support of the family...I do not share your intentions, but I do not deny you my blessing,” his father concluded.

The way to the priesthood was open: in a few months, Francis received minor orders, the sub-diaconate, the diaconate and finally, on 18 December, priestly ordination. He spent three days preparing to celebrate his first mass on 21 December.

A few days after Christmas, Francis de Sales could be officially “installed” as provost of the cathedral and on that occasion he delivered one of his most famous addresses, a veritable [harangue](#). One can already sense the ardour and zeal of the pastor, in tune with what the [Council of Trent](#) had indicated as the way to reform.

5. Missionary in the Chablais: 1594-1598

The [Chablais](#) is the territory bordering Lake [Geneva](#). The priests in this area of Savoy had been driven out by the [Calvinists](#) in Geneva and the churches were without pastors. But now, in 1594, [Duke Charles Emmanuel](#) had reconquered the area and urged the Bishop of Annecy to send new missionaries. The proposal was passed on to the clergy, but no one had the courage to go to such hostile areas, risking their lives. Only Francis declared himself available and on 14 September, with his cousin Louis, he left for this mission.

He took up residence in [the Allinges](#), a castle where Baron d'Hermance watched over his safety. Every morning, after Mass, he went down in search of the elders of [Thonon](#). On Sundays he preached in the [church of St Hippolytus](#), but the faithful were few in number. So he decided to write and have his sermons printed: he posted them in public places and slid them under the door of Catholics and Protestants alike.



Chapel of the Château des Allinges, France

His model was Jesus on the streets of Palestine: he was inspired by his gentleness and goodness, his frankness and sincerity. There was no lack of hostility and rejection, but 'the first ears of corn', the first conversions did come about. He was stern and inflexible towards error and those who spread heresy, but of unlimited patience towards all those he considered victims of the heretics' theories.

"I love preaching that relies more on love of neighbour than on indignation, even of the Huguenots, whom one must treat with great compassion, not by flattering them, but by deploring them." The Salesian spirit seems to be concentrated in this expression of Francis: **"Truth that is not charitable springs from charity that is not true"**.

The initiative to celebrate **the three Christmas Masses** in the church of St Hippolytus in 1596 is still worth remembering as a reminder, in this extraordinary period, of Francis' zeal, kindness and courage.

But the initiative that contributed most to dismantling heresy in the Chablais was [Forty Hour](#) devotion promoted and led by Francis' new collaborator, Fr Cherubin de la Maurienne. The devotion was celebrated at [Annemasse](#) in 1597, on the outskirts of Geneva.

The following year the Forty Hours were held at Thonon (beginning of October 1598).

At the end of the year, Francis had to leave the "mission" and

go to [Rome](#) to deal with various problems of the diocese. He made important friends in Rome ([Bellarmine](#), [Baronio](#), [Ancina](#)...) and met the priests of the [Oratory of St Philip Neri](#) and fell in love with their spirit. He returned to Annecy via [Loreto](#), then by ship he sailed up to [Venice](#); he stopped in [Bologna](#) and [Turin](#) where he discussed with the Duke how much the Pope had granted to the parishes of the diocese. In 1602, he went to Paris again to negotiate with the Nuncio and the King on delicate diplomatic issues concerning the diocese and relations with the Calvinists. He remained there for nine long months but returned home empty-handed. Despite this being the diplomatic result, the spiritual and human profit was able to draw from it was very rich and important. Decisive for Francis' life was his encounter with the famous '[Madame Acarie](#)' group: it was a kind of spiritual gathering where the works of [St Teresa of Avila](#) and [St John of the Cross](#) were read. Thanks to this spiritual movement, the reformed Carmelite Order would be introduced to France. On his way back, Francis received the news that his beloved bishop had died.

6. Francis, Bishop of Geneva: 1602–1622

Francis was consecrated bishop on 8 December 1602, in the little church of Thorens, and remained at the head of his diocese for twenty years. "On that day God took me from myself to take me for himself and thus give me to the people, meaning that he had transformed me from what I was for me into what I should be for them."

Let me highlight three important aspects of this period:

6.1 Francis the pastor

During these years his zeal shone through in the words: "***Da mihi animas***" which became his programme.

"The priest is all for God and all for the people" he used to say, and he was the model of this first of all!

The problems of the diocese were many and very serious: they

concerned the clergy, the monasteries, the training of future ministers, the non-existent seminary, catechesis, the lack of economic resources.

Francis immediately began visiting the more than four hundred parishes. This period of visitation lasted five or six years: he spoke with the priests, comforted, encouraged, solved the most thorny problems, preached, administered the sacrament of Confirmation to children or future spouses, celebrated weddings...

To remedy the ignorance of the clergy, he taught theology at home, and gathered his priests together in synod each year. He preached... "For some years, he taught many theological subjects to his canons in Annecy and dictated lessons to them in Latin."

There were many who aspired to religious life or the priesthood: it was not vocations that were lacking. It was very often a real sense of vocation that was lacking!

He wrote a pamphlet, *Advice to Confessors*, a jewel of pastoral zeal where doctrine, personal experience, advice were interwoven...

He visited the numerous monasteries in the diocese: some he closed, had people in others transferred elsewhere, founded new ones.

He struggled to have a seminary, right to the end: funds were lacking due to the selfishness of the Knights of St Lazarus and St Maurice, who withheld the revenues due to the diocese.

The dominant characteristic in Francis the pastor was his ability **to accompany people**.

"It is a real effort to guide individual souls, but an effort that makes one feel it is as light as the reapers' and harvesters' efforts, who are never as happy as when they have much work and a big load to carry."

The characteristics of this individualised style of education:

Richness of humanity: "There are no souls in the world who love more warmly, more tenderly and I would say more completely and lovingly than I since it has pleased God to make my heart thus."

Father and brother: he could be very demanding, but always in a gentle and serene way. He never avoided the real issue at stake: just read the first part of the *Introduction to the Devout Life* to realise this.

Prudence and practicality: “Be kind to yourself during this pregnancy... if you get tired of kneeling, sit down, and if you don’t have enough attention to pray for half an hour, pray for just a quarter of an hour...” (Madame de la Fléchère)

Sense of God: “You need to do everything through love and nothing through constraint; love obedience more than you fear disobedience. “May God be the God of your heart.”

Francis was described as the truest copy of Jesus on earth ([St. Vincent de Paul](#))

6.2 Francis the writer:

Despite the commitments associated with his being a bishop, Francis found time to devote himself to writing. Writing what?

Thousands of letters to people asking for his spiritual guidance, to the newly founded monasteries of the Visitation, to prominent members of the nobility or the Church to try to solve problems, and to his family and friends.

The *Introduction to the Devout Life* was published in 1608: it is Francis’ best known work.

“It is in the character, in the genius, but above all in the heart of Francis de Sales that one must seek the true origin and remote preparation of the *Introduction to the Devout Life* or *Philothea*”: thus wrote Dom B. Mackey, a man who dedicated his life to the study of the Saint’s works, in the introduction to the Annecy critical edition.

The preface bears the date of 8 August 1608.

This book received **an enthusiastic reception**.

La [Chantal](#) speaks of it as “a book dictated by the Holy Spirit”. In its 400 years of life, the book has had over 1300 editions with millions of copies, translated into all the languages of the world.

Four centuries later, these pages still retain their charm and relevance.

In 1616, another of Francis' writings appeared: *The Treatise on the Love of God*, his masterpiece, written for those who want to aim for the heights! He guides them with wisdom and experience to live total abandonment to God's will... up to the point "where lovers meet!" that is, to Calvary. Only the saints know how to lead us to holiness.

6.3 Francis the founder

In 1604, Francis went to [Dijon](#) to preach for [Lent](#), invited by the Archbishop of [Bourges](#), Andrew Fremyot. From the outset he was struck by the attention and devout behaviour of one woman there, Baroness Jeanne François [Jane Frances] Fremyot, the archbishop's sister.

Between 1604, the year Jane met Francis, until 1610, the date Jane entered the novitiate at Annecy, the two saints met four or five times, each time for a week or ten days. The meetings were enlivened by the presence of various people from the family (Francis' mother, sister) or friends (Madame Brulart, the abbess of Puy d'Orbe...).

Jane Frances would have wanted to speed things up, but Francis proceeded with caution.

Little by little the various knots were loosened, they found consensus, serenity and peace grew and this allowed the problems to be better resolved.

God had taken possession of her heart and made her a woman ready to give her life for Him. Her long-cherished dream came true on 6 June 1610: a historic day! Jane Frances and her two friends (Giacomina Favre and Carlotta de Brécard) entered a small house, "[la Galerie](#)" and began their novitiate year.

On 6 June the following year the three made their first professions before Francis. Meanwhile, other young people and women asked to be received. Thus began the religious family inspired by the Visitation of Mary.

The expansion of the new [Order](#) was prodigious. Some figures: from 1611 (year of foundation) to 1622 (year of Francis' death) there were thirteen foundations: Annecy, [Lyon](#), [Moulins](#), [Grenoble](#), Bourges, Paris.... By the time of Jane Frances' death

in 1641, there would be 87 monasteries with an average of over 3 new ones per year! Among them two in Piedmont: Turin and [Pinerolo](#)!

7. Final years

Francis had to take the road to Paris twice in the last years of his life: important diplomatic and spiritual journeys, tiring journeys for him as he was already tired and in ill health.

Francis' reputation for holiness was known in Paris to the point that [Cardinal Henri de Gondi](#) thought of him as his likely successor and put it to him. Francis' sympathetic reply can be noted: "I married a poor woman (the diocese of Annecy); I cannot divorce to marry a rich one (the diocese of Paris)!"

In the last year of his life he undertook another trip to Pinerolo, Piedmont, at the Pope's request, to restore peace in a monastery at Foglianti (reformed Cistercians) who could not agree on their superior general. Francis managed to reconcile minds and hearts to their unanimous satisfaction.

Another order from the Duke required Francis to accompany [Cardinal Maurice of Savoy](#) to [Avignon](#) to meet [King Louis XIII](#).

On his return, he stopped in [Lyon at the Visitandine Monastery](#). Here he met Jane Frances de Chantal for the last time. He was exhausted, but still preached until the end, which came on 28 December 1622.

Francis died with a dream: to retire from the affairs of the diocese and to spend the last years of his life in the peaceful [Monastery at Talloires](#), on the shores of the lake, writing what he thought of as his final work, a *Treatise on the Love of Neighbour*, and praying the Rosary. We can be certain that he had already written this book through the example of his life; as for praying the Rosary, he now lacks neither time nor the tranquillity.

[\(continued\)](#)

New missionaries

La prima spedizione missionaria fu benedetta dalle lacrime di don Bosco che disse: «Noi diamo principio ad una grand'opera. Chi sa, che non sia questa partenza come un seme da cui abbia a sorgere una grande pianta?». La profezia si è avverata. La prima volta fu [...]

Letter Rector Major. Appeal for missionaries 2023

We remember 163 years ago – 18th December 1859 – when Don Bosco founded our “Pious Society of St. Francis de Sales.” Since then, it has never stopped expanding. Thanks to our missionaries today Don Bosco’s charism is present in 134 countries, and next year we are preparing to start new presences in Niger and Algeria. Don Bosco’s 6th successor, Fr. Luigi Ricceri, had reminded us that the missionary spirit and commitment were not only a personal interest of our founder but a true *charisma foundationis* that he transmitted to us and to the whole Salesian Family (ACG 261, p.14). Therefore, today is a beautiful opportunity to send you this appeal for

missionaries.

During the send-off of the first missionary expedition in 1875 Don Bosco had made a prophecy: "... Who knows if this departure, this humble beginning, may be the seed that will grow into a mighty tree? ... Who knows if this departure may awaken in many hearts a desire to consecrate themselves to God in the missions, to join forces with us and reinforce our ranks? I hope so. ..." (BMXI, 385). In 1875, even though there were only 171 Salesians (64 perpetually professed of whom 49 were priests, 107 temporarily professed) and 81 novices, Don Bosco sent 11 Salesians to Argentina. At his death in 1888 there were 773 Salesians of whom 137 were missionaries sent by Don Bosco himself in eleven missionary expeditions.

Today we find ourselves in a vastly different context from Don Bosco's time. Today "missions" cannot be understood solely as a movement towards "mission lands" as in the past. Today Salesian missionaries come from the five continents and are sent by the Rector Major to the five continents. In a world where borders are in danger of closing more and more, Salesian missionaries are sent not only to respond to the need for personnel but, above all, to bear witness that for us there are no borders, to contribute to intercultural dialogue, to the inculturation of faith and of our charism, and to trigger processes that can generate new local vocations.



In my first letter as Rector Major, I expressed my conviction that "a great treasure of our Congregation is precisely its missionary capability." (ACG 419, p. 24). I have a firm conviction that we Salesians need to journey towards a greater awareness of our internationality. And the missionary generosity of the confreres is a prophetic witness that our Congregation is without borders. Indeed, the presence of missionaries in a Province helps better reflect the internationality of our Congregation and that the Salesian

charism is not monochromatic and that differences and multiculturality enrich the Province and our whole Congregation.

On the contrary, a Province composed only of confreres from the same culture risks being reduced to an ethnic enclave that is less sensitive to the challenge of interculturality and less able to see beyond the boundaries of its own cultural world. This is why I have insisted several times that we do not make our religious profession for a country or a Province. We are Salesians of Don Bosco in the Congregation and for the mission, wherever we are most needed and wherever our service is possible.



Already in 1972, our Special General Chapter had considered missionary relaunching as “the thermometer of the pastoral vitality of the Congregation and an effective means against the danger of taking a middle-class lifestyle.” (SCG, 296). Likewise, the capacity of the confreres to welcome and accompany the new missionaries sent to their Province is a thermometer of their missionary spirit.

Thanks to the missionary spirit in our Congregation, confreres continue to give their lives to God as missionaries. To my appeal last 18th December 2021, 36 Salesians responded by sending me the letter expressing their missionary availability. After careful discernment 25 were chosen as members of the 153rd missionary expedition this year. The rest continue their discernment.

Therefore, with this letter, I invite you, dear confreres, to pray and make a careful discernment whether the Lord is calling you, within our common Salesian vocation, to be missionaries, which implies a lifelong commitment (*ad vitam*).

I invite the Provincials, together with their Delegates for missionary animation (PDMA), to be the first to help the

confreres cultivate the missionary desire and to facilitate their discernment, inviting them, after personal dialogue, to place themselves at the disposal of the Rector Major to respond to the missionary needs of the Congregation. Then the General Councillor for the Missions, in my name, will continue the discernment that will lead to the choice of the missionaries for the 154th missionary expedition that will take place, God willing, on Sunday 24th September 2023, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco, as it has been done since the time of Don Bosco.

The dialogue with the General Councillor for the Missions and the shared reflection within the General Council allows me to indicate the urgencies for 2023 and where I would like a considerable number of confreres be sent:

- to South Africa, Mozambique and to new frontiers on the African continent;
- to Albania, Kosovo, Slovenia and to other new frontiers of Project Europe;
- to Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Mongolia, and Yakutia;
- to our many presences in the islands of Oceania;
- to missionary frontiers of Latin America and amongst indigenous peoples.

I greet you, dear confreres, with genuine affection and with a remembrance before Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco here in Valdocco.

Turin Valdocco, 18th December 2022

The invisible other Don

BoscOs

Readers of the *Salesian Bulletin* already know about the intercontinental journey that Don Bosco's Casket went on a few years ago. The mortal remains of our saint reached dozens and dozens of countries around the world and lingered in a thousand cities and towns, welcomed everywhere with admiration and sympathy. I do not know which saint's body has travelled so far and which Italian corpse has been received so enthusiastically beyond the borders of its own country. Perhaps none.

While this 'journey' is already known history, the intercontinental of the [ACSSA](#) (Association of Salesian History Scholars) from November 2018 to March 2019 is certainly not. It was to coordinate a series of four Study Seminars promoted by the same Association in Bratislava (Slovakia), Bangkok (Thailand), Nairobi (Kenya), Buenos Aires (Argentina). The fifth was held in Hyderabad (India) in June 2018.

Well: on these trips I did not see the Salesian houses, colleges, schools, parishes, missions as I have done on other occasions and as anyone who travels a bit anywhere from the north to the south, from the east to the west of the world can do; instead I encountered a story of Don Bosco, *all yet to be written*.

The other Don BoscOs

The theme of the Study Seminars was in fact to present figures of deceased Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who, over a short or long period of their lives, had stood out as particularly significant and relevant, and above all had left their mark after their death. Some of them, then, were authentic "innovators" of the Salesian charism, capable of inculturating it in the most varied ways, obviously in absolute fidelity to Don Bosco and his spirit.

The result was a gallery of a hundred or so men and women of the 20th century, all different from each other, who knew how to make themselves “other Don Boscos”: that is, to open their eyes to their land of birth or mission, to become aware of the material, cultural and spiritual needs of the young people living there, especially the poorest, and to “invent” the best way of satisfying them.

Bishops, priests, nuns, lay Salesians, members of the Salesian Family: all figures, men and women, who without being saints – in our research we excluded saints and those already on their way to the altars – have fully realised Don Bosco’s educational mission in different spheres and roles: as educators and priests, as professors and teachers, animators of oratories and youth centres, founders and directors of educational works, formators of vocations and new religious institutes, as writers and musicians, architects and builders of churches and colleges, artists of wood and painting, missionaries *ad gentes*, witnesses of the faith in prison, simple Salesians and simple Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Among them, not a few have often lived a life of hard sacrifices, overcoming obstacles of all kinds, learning very difficult languages, often risking death for lack of acceptable sanitary conditions, impossible climatic conditions, hostile and persecutory political regimes, even actual attacks. The latest of these happened just as I was leaving for Nairobi: Spanish Salesian, [Fr Cesare Fernández](#), murdered in cold blood on 15 February 2018 at the border between Togo and Burkina Faso. One of the most recent Salesians ‘martyrs’, we could call him, knowing the individual as I did.

A story to learn about



La Boca, neighbourhood of Buenos Aires, Argentina; first mission among emigrants

What can we say then? That this too is *the unknown history of Don Bosco*, or, if you like, of the Sons and Daughters of the saint? If the saint's casket has been received, as we were saying, with so much respect and esteem by public authorities and the simple population even in non-Christian countries, it means that his Sons and Daughters have not only sung his praises – this too has certainly been done, since Don Bosco's image can be found just about everywhere – but have also realised his dreams: to make God's love for young people known, to bring the good news of the Gospel everywhere, to the end of the world (in Tierra del Fuego!).

Those who, like me and my colleagues from ACSSA, were able in February and March 2018 to listen to experiences of Salesian life lived in the 20th century in some fifty countries on four continents, can only affirm, as Don Bosco often did when looking at the impressive development of the congregation before his eyes: 'Here is the finger of God'. If the finger of God has been in Salesian works and foundations, it has also been in the men and women who have consecrated their entire lives to the evangelical ideal realised in the manner of Don Bosco.

Are these presented to us as "next door saints"? Some certainly, even considering their personal limitations, their characters, their whims, and, why not, their sins (which only God knows). All, however, were endowed with immense faith, great hope, strong charity and generosity, much love for Don Bosco and souls. Some of them – think of the pioneer missionaries in Patagonia – one might be tempted to call real "madmen", madmen for God and for souls of course.

The concrete results of this story are there for all to see, but the names of many have remained almost 'invisible' until now. We can get to know them by reading "[Volti di uno stesso carisma: Salesiani e Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice nel XX secolo](#)" (Faces of the same charism: Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in the 20th century), a multilingual

book, published by Editrice LAS, in the "Associazione Cultori Storia Salesiana – Studi" series (not yet available in English).

If evil leaves its mark, so does good. '*Bonum est diffusivum sui*' wrote St Thomas Aquinas centuries ago. The Salesians and Salesian women presented at our seminars are proof of this; alongside them or following them, others have done the same, until today.

Let us briefly introduce these new faces of Don Bosco.

1	Antonio COJAZZI, Fr.	1880-1953	brilliant educator	Educators in the field	EU
2	Domenico MORETTI, Fr.	1900-1989	experience in Salesian oratories with the poorest young people	Educators in the field	EU
3	Samuele VOSTI, Fr.	1874-1939	creator and promoter of a renewed festive oratory in Valdocco	Educators in the field	EU
4	Karl ZIEGLER, Fr.	1914-1990	nature lover and scout	Educators in the field	EU
5	Alfonsina FINCO, Sr.	1869-1934	dedication to abandoned children	Educators in the field	EU
6	Margherita MARIANI, Sr.	1858-1939	Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Rome	Educators in the field	EU
7	Sisto COLOMBO, Fr.	1878-1938	man of culture and mystical soul	Educators in the field	EU

8	Franc WALLAND, Fr.	1887-1975	theologian and provincial	Educators in the field	EU
9	Maria ZUCCHI, Sr.	1875-1949	made Salesian mark on the Don Bosco Institute in Messina	Educators in the field	EU
10	Clotilde MORANO, Sr.	1885-1963	the teaching of women's physical education	Educators in the field	EU
11	Annetta URI, Sr.	1903-1989	from the desk to building sites: the courage to build the future of the school	Educators in the field	EU
12	Frances PEDRICK, Sr.	1887-1981	the first Daughter of Mary Help of Christians to graduate from Oxford University	Educators in the field	EU
13	Giuseppe CACCIA, Bro.	1881-1963	a life dedicated to Salesian publishing	Educators in the field	EU
14	Rufillo UGUCCIONI, Fr.	1891-1966	writer for children, evangeliser and disseminator of Salesian values	Educators in the field	EU
15	Flora FORNARA, Sr.	1902-1971	a life for educational theatre	Educators in the field	EU

16	Gaspar MESTRE, Bro.	1888-1962	the Salesian school of carving, sculpture and decoration in Sarriá (Barcelona)	Educators in the field	EU
17	Wictor GRABELSKI, Fr.	1857-1902	a forerunner of Salesian work in Poland	Educators in the field	EU
18	Antoni HLOND, Fr.	1884-1963	musician, composer, founder of a school for organists	Initiators	EU
19	Carlo TORELLLO, Fr.	1886-1967	popular devotion and civic memory in Latina	Initiators	EU
20	Jan KAJZER Bro.	1892-1976	engineer co-author of the Polish “art deco” style and moderniser of the Salesian vocational school in Oświęcim	Initiators	EU
21	Antonio CAVOLI, Fr.	1888-1972	founder of religious congregation in Japan inspired by the Salesian charism	Initiators	EU
22	Iside MALGRATI, Sr.	1904-1992	innovative Salesian in printing, school and vocational training	Initiators	EU

23	Anna JUZEK, Sr.	1879-1957	contribution to the establishment of the works of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Poland	Initiators	EU
24	Mária ČERNÁ, Sr.	1928-2011	basis for the rebirth of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Slovakia	Initiators	EU
25	Antonio SALA, Fr.	1836-1895	economer at Valdocco and earliest Economer General	Salesians of Don Bosco and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in leadership roles	EU
26	Francesco SCALONI, Fr.	1861-1926	an extraordinary figure of a Salesian superior	Salesians of Don Bosco and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in leadership roles	EU

27	Luigi TERRONE, Fr.	1875-1968	novice master and rector	Salesians of Don Bosco and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in leadership roles	EU
28	Marcelino OLAECHEA, Bishop	1889-1972	promoter of housing for workers	Salesians of Don Bosco and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in leadership roles	EU
29	Stefano TROCHTA, Cardinal	1905-1974	martyr under Nazis and Communists	Salesians of Don Bosco and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in leadership roles	EU

30	Alba DEAMBROSIS, Sr.	1887-1964	builder of female Salesian work in the German-speaking area	Salesians of Don Bosco and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in leadership roles	EU
31	Virginia FERRARO ORTÍ, Sr.	1894-1963	from trade unionist to Salesian superior	Salesians of Don Bosco and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in leadership roles	EU
32	Raffaele PIPERNI, Fr.	1842-1930	parish priest, 'mediator' in the integration of Italian immigrants into the San Francisco mainstream	Pioneers in mission	AM, AS, AF
33	Remigio RIZZARDI, Fr.	1863-1912	the father of beekeeping in Colombia	Pioneers in mission	AM, AS, AF
34	Carlos PANE, Fr.	1856-1923	pioneer of the Salesian presence in Spain and Peru	Pioneers in mission	AM, AS, AF

35	Florencio José MARTÍNEZ EMBODAS, Fr.	1894-1971	a Salesian way of building	Pioneers in mission	AM, AS, AF
36	Martina PETRINI PRADO, Sr.	1874-1965	Daughters of Mary Help of Christians; origins in fast- developing Uruguay	Pioneers in mission	AM, AS, AF
37	Anna María COPPA, Sr.	1891-1973	foundress and face of the first Catholic school in Ecuador	Pioneers in mission	AM, AS, AF
38	Rose MOORE, Sr.	1911-1996	pioneer in the rehabilitation of blind Thai youth	Pioneers in mission	AM, AS, AF
39	Mirta MONDIN, Sr.	1922-1977	the origins of the first Catholic girls' school in Gwangju (Korea)	Pioneers in mission	AM, AS, AF
40	Terezija MEDVEŠEK, Sr.	1906-2001	valiant missionary in North-East India	Pioneers in mission	AM, AS, AF
41	Nancy PEREIRA, Sr.	1923-2010	tireless dedication to the poor	Pioneers in mission	AM, AS, AF
42	Jeanne VINCENT, Sr.	1915-1997	one of the first missionaries in Port-Gentil, Gabon	Pioneers in mission	AM, AS, AF
43	Maria Gertrudes DA ROCHA, Sr.	1933-2017	missionary and economist in Mozambique	Pioneers in mission	AM, AS, AF

44	Pietro GIACOMINI, Bishop	1904-1982	obedience blossoms	Salesians of Don Bosco and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in leadership roles	AM, AS, AF
45	José Luis CARREÑO ECHANDIA, Fr.	1905-1986	a multifaceted missionary with a preferential option for the poor	Salesians of Don Bosco and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in leadership roles	AM, AS, AF
46	Catherine MANIA, Sr.	1903-1983	first provincial in North-East India	Salesians of Don Bosco and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in leadership roles	AM, AS, AF

47	William Richard AINSWORTH, Fr.	1908-2005	an essay on modern Salesian leadership	Salesians of Don Bosco and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in leadership roles	AM, AS, AF
48	Blandine ROCHE, Sr.	1906-1999	the Salesian presence in the difficult years of post-independence Tunisia	Salesians of Don Bosco and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in leadership roles	AM, AS, AF