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Getting To Know
Don Bosco Series
His Pedagogy

Preface

For every member of the Salesian Family, and every person who resonates with the spirit of Don Bosco, August 16th 2015 is a highly meaningful day to look forward to, as we will celebrate the bicentennial of Don Bosco's birth. As a way to get all of us ready for this great day, a three-year preparation period has been set, through which we can enrich our knowledge of Don Bosco as a founder, father and educator for the youth. Starting from 2012, we have placed our focus on different major areas in the personality and charism of Don Bosco, namely "His History", "His Pedagogy" and "His Spirituality", so that we can come to know and imitate him better.

In this book, we have brought together a series of monthly articles written for the Salesian Family by Fr Pascual Chávez, Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco, under the theme of "His Pedagogy" in his Strenna 2013. These enlightening articles will guide you through the journey of exploring the secrets of the educational method of Don Bosco, how he coped with challenges, what was behind the success of his lifelong dedication to the mission of educating the young, and how he accomplished this most meaningful of the missions that can be entrusted by God to man's good will. In these articles, Fr Chávez, very creatively, was a special form of expression. Throughout, he has Don Bosco speak in the first person. The reader will certainly appreciate this as an encouragement to grow in intimate friendship with Don Bosco himself.

It is our hope that after reading this book, you will be inspired to try to put into practice Don Bosco's educational methodology. You will also be willing to preserve his spirit to continue his work of serving the underprivileged youth in this

ever-changing world.

In the Appendices to this book, we have included a commentary of Fr Chávez on his Strenna for 2013. It gives the reasons for studying the pedagogy of Don Bosco, asserts the need of "rediscovering" his Preventive System, and explains how we can respond today to God's call to serve poor and abandoned youth. In addition, a brief biography of Don Bosco, presented in point form, is also provided for the readers' easy reference.

Fr Lanfranco M Fedrigotti

May 24th 2014

Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians

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Let Us Learn Lessons From Everything That Happens To Us

DON BOSCO NARRATES:

Speaking of myself and telling my story, I have to start from the first years of my life. Beautiful and difficult years, years in which I learned to be a boy and become a man.

I can tell you with great simplicity: that Don Bosco

whom you may already know something of, the Don Bosco who one day would become a priest and educator and friend of youth, took lessons from a lot of things that happened in those early years.

I put before you the values that I breathed, that I'd learned to live and I, afterwards, passed on as my heritage to my Salesians. Over the years they would become the basis of my teaching.

The Presence of a Mother

Mamma Margherita was just 29 years old when my father died; died within a few days due to a terrible pneumonia. Energetic and courageous woman that she was, she did not feel sorry for herself; but rolled up her sleeves, and took on her double duty. Sweet and determined, she was both father and mother. Many years later, I became a priest for young people, I can say as a result of experience in the field: *"The first happiness of a lad is to know that 'I am loved' "*.

For this, with my lads I was a real dad, with concrete gestures of peaceful love, happy and "catching". I loved my boys and I gave them concrete proof of this affection, giving myself totally to their cause. This love, strong and manly, I did not learn about from books; I inherited it from my mother and for this I am grateful to her.

Work

My mother was the first one to set us an example. She always insisted: "Those who do not get used to

working when they are young, will almost always become 'lazybones' until old age". In the family chat after dinner and after the evening prayers (the famous "Good-Night") I insisted that "Heaven is not made for 'lazybones'".

The Meaning of God

My mum had condensed the entire catechism into a phrase that she repeated at every moment: "God sees you! I don't." At the school of a full-time catechist as was my mother, I grew up under the eye of God. Not a God-COP, cold and unforgiving who bit me openly, but a good and generous God whom I could see in the succession of the seasons, whom I learnt to know and to thank when the wheat was harvested or after the grapes were gathered, a great God whom I admired, in the evening ecstatically staring at the stars.

"Let's Talk about It!"

This is a phrase spoken in Piedmontese by our old people; and how much wisdom I found in this saying. It was used to talk, to explain, to arrive at a common decision, taken without a particular person wanting to impose one's views. Later, I'll make the word "reason" one of the pillars of my educational method. The word "reason" will be for me synonymous with dialogue, acceptance, trust, understanding; will become a research attitude because between the teacher and the boy there can be no rivalry, but only friendship and mutual esteem. For me, the young lad will never be a passive person just carrying out orders. In my contacts with the lads, I will not ever pretend to listen, but really listen to them, discussing their views, their reasons.

The Pleasure of Working Together

For many years I was the absolute protagonist among my companions: I am thinking of my first experiences as acrobat at the Becchi, those wonderful Sunday afternoons; I think of the popularity gained among my schoolmates in Chieri, to such an extent that in a page of the autobiography I could say that "I was revered by colleagues as a captain of a small army". But I understood later that it was the desire of everyone to be the centre of attention. That was the beginning of the Cheer Society, a charming group of students where everyone was equally involved. The Regulation was composed of three short articles: to be always cheerful, fulfil one's duties well, avoid anything that wasn't worthy of a good Christian. Later, Sodalities would start, youth groups, true workshops of apostolate and holiness within everyone's reach. I was saying that they were "things for the young" for promoting their initiatives, and making space for their natural creativity.

The Pleasure of Being Together

I wanted educators, whether young or old, to be always among the young, as "loving fathers". No act of mistrust in them, but just walking alongside together, to build and share together. I'm really pleased to say with deep joy: "With you I am well. It's just my life to be with you."