

SAINT JOHN BOSCO - *Feast Day January 31*



When John Bosco lived in Europe, many boys were orphaned and poor. Without families and religious training, these boys often got into fights, used bad language, and stole, hurting others. John Bosco might have been like that, too, if it hadn't been for his devout mother.

John was the youngest son of a peasant family. His father died when John was two, and the family became very poor. As a youngster, John taught religion to other boys and got them to go to church. His acrobatics and magic tricks fascinated them. Encouraged by a priest, John entered the seminary wearing clothes provided by charity.

Priests at the seminary saw that John was a natural leader and encouraged him to use his gifts to keep other young people out of trouble. John started gathering boys together on Sunday for a day in the country. They would begin with Mass, followed by breakfast and games. The afternoon would include a picnic, a catechism lesson, and evening prayers. The group grew larger because John Bosco loved the boys. He made each one feel important. He had a gift for handling difficult boys.

John was able to get a house for himself and forty boys. His mother became the housekeeper. In the first six years the number of boys at the house grew to 150. John Bosco gave a father's care to rowdy, neglected boys. He is known as the "friend of boys" and is often called Don, which means Father.

Don Bosco opened workshops to train boys to be shoemakers and tailors. He saw that in addition to getting a religious education the boys learned to play musical instruments, perform in plays, and engage in sports. He also wrote and printed books on Christian faith for boys.

At that time the state did not favour the Church, and for four years men tried to assassinate John Bosco. Once they tried to shoot him while he was teaching. At other times they tried to poison him and attacked him on the street. Eventually, however, because of his good work, even his enemies began to support him.

John Bosco knew God wanted him to work with boys because of a dream he had when he was young. In this dream, boys who had been playing roughly suddenly began playing together as happily as lambs. John heard a voice saying, "Teach them right from wrong. Teach them the beauty of goodness and the ugliness of sin." When John told his mother about his dream, she said it might mean God wanted him to be a priest and care for some of the sheep in his flock.

John Bosco spent so much time working that people who knew him well became worried about his health. They said he should take more time for rest and sleep. John replied that he'd have enough time to rest in heaven. "Right now," he said, "how can I rest? The devil doesn't rest from his work."

In 1859 John began a religious community of priests which is still active today, caring for boys who have been neglected. Because John admired Francis de Sales, he named the group the Salesians. Later, with St. Mary Mazzarello, he began a community of Sisters called the Daughters of Our Lady, Help of Christians, to help girls.

The enthralling story of the great modern apostle of youth, Saint John Bosco, and his best-loved pupil who became a saint, Dominic Savio. Blessed with tremendous natural and supernatural gifts, including a wonderful sense of humour, Saint John Bosco overcame overwhelming obstacles to help deprived children find a better life.

Juggler, magician, acrobat, tailor, teacher and writer -John Bosco became all of these in his efforts to lead boys and girls to God. A prayer was the price of admission to his shows; a friendly contest to match skill or strength was his answer to the hoodlums who laughed at him. As a priest he was known as Don Bosco and built churches and schools. Don Bosco's schools were cheerful places where the school spirit ran high.

Don Bosco died on January 31, 1888. All the people of Turin came out on the streets to honour him. His funeral became a joyous proclamation of thanksgiving to God for the life of this wonderful man. Over 40,000 people came to his wake.

A FEW OF DON BOSCO'S SAYINGS ...

- "Without confidence and love, there can be no true education. If you want to be loved...you must love yourselves, and make your children feel that you love them."
- "The school was not the end; it was rather the instrumental means for improving the way of life."
- "If one is to do good, he must have a little courage, be ready for sacrifice, deal affably with all and never slight anybody. By following this method I have always had significant success, in fact, marvelous success."

PARTICULARLY TO YOUTH HE WOULD SAY...

- "Act today in such a way that you need not blush tomorrow."
- "Do not put off till tomorrow the good you can do today. You may not have a tomorrow."
- "Let us strive to fare well in this life and in the next."
- "Be slow to pass judgment."
- "Do you want your companions to respect you? Always think well of everyone, and be ready to help others. Do this and you will be happy."
- "Run, jump, have all the fun you want at the right time, but, for heaven's sake, do not commit sin!" (*from St. Philip Neri*).
- "Servite Domino in laetitia!" (*Serve the Lord joyfully!*)

DOMINICSAVIO
DONBOSCO
GODSEESYOU
HEAVEN
KINDNESS
MAMAMARGARITA
MARY
NEVER SIN
POPE
PRIEST OF GOD
REASON
SALESIAN
WORK

Q S U I K X O V K D N B L J S A Y D R F
W Y C O Z B S N I Y A V O P S D V W U V
D I I T Y L H Y F N J T D D E W U D N J
E M E J C S N N I S R E V E N V Y K D D
P N P O P W E A P F F T R C D O A J X U
S Z P P C I N E I J Y N M H N T B R R V
K Z K R Q Y Y P S S K P U Q I E N Y F H
P R Y F M I A I M D E S H R K E N Q B T
O Q V J F J C S Q X O L A L V W T T Z Z
B X O E B Z Q S O S O G A A J K K R H Z
P K C Y Y N O R V P R I E S T O F G O D
Z X S F X Z H C O A E H I B A H I L J C
I G O E N G U P M U A F N D E R F I D J
X N B W D C E A P T S Q E F G E Y X W P
J I N Z H K M B L P O Q R H Z G L W R S
P R O L R A P K M Y N G J H U O I P D F
J Z D O M I N I C S A V I O Y Y I Z I S
U Y W A W X U K M W K X M W Q I R K N T
U D R H J C W D O T J G P T X H V C S W
F Y X Q R F G B M T Q R J E A Q Z J X N

"It's not enough to love the children,
it is necessary that they are aware
that they are loved"

-St. John Bosco



Prayer to St John Bosco

Saint John Bosco,
Friend of the young,
Teacher in the ways of God,
Your dedication to
empowering the needy
inspires us still.
Help me to work for
a better world,
where the young are given
the chance to flourish,
where the poor's dream for
justice can come true,
and where God's
compassion is shown
to be real.

Intercede for me
as I bring my needs
to you and to
Our heavenly
Mother,
the Help of
Christians.

St John Bosco,
Pray for us!

