

FEAST DAY OF ST. JOHN BOSCO

Sunday, January 31

This January 31, Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time, is the commemoration of St. John Bosco, the founder of the Salesian Religious Congregation, whose priests serve our parish of St. Benedict.

Rather than write about the life of don Bosco, as he was known, I would like to share a reflection and how this great Saint entered my life.

In the little town of Sicily, where I was born, the pastor of my home parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, where I was an altar server from age seven, used to gather us boys in the spacious room behind the main altar of the church to teach us catechism.

In this room, which also functioned as the sacristy, every Sunday we would listen with attention from our pastor, don Filippo, to the adventures in the life of don Bosco, the future St. John Bosco, apostle of the Young and founder of the Salesian family.

I remember that the large sacristy was filled with about thirty or forty noisy boys, until the parish priest would set up the projector to show and tell the life of don Bosco on slides, which may be the equivalent of today's presentation on TV or YOU TUBE, or some other modern means well known by today's young people.

Don Bosco's dreams, his abilities to entertain the boys in order to bring them to church afterwards and teach catechism lessons, the ways he was able to outsmart jealous clergy who tried to have him committed to a Sanatorium, the miraculous appearances of a huge dog, nicknamed "GRIGIO", who saved many a time from his enemies, etc.

All of these stories masterfully told by our pastor made such a deep impression on our young minds, that we wanted to give our heart to Jesus and gave us a desire for holiness, and go to confession and holy communion, as if Don Bosco himself had been there speaking to us.

I remember feeling excited to hear about young Dominic Savio, whose large picture was hanging just behind the priest's desk in the sacristy.

How many of us had gone home that Sunday afternoon with a desire to emulate the saintly young Dominic, and like him, we dared to write down on a piece of paper "LA MORTE MA NON PECCATI" (I RATHER DIE THAN COMMIT SIN)!

Looking back, I now realize that our pastor, don Filippo, though he was a Diocesan priest, he had a "Salesian heart". Like don Bosco, he would take us boys on picnic in the countryside, where we would play games, sing songs and eat fresh buns from the local bakery.

In my parish priest I saw don Bosco, from him I received valuable lessons how to live close to Jesus. The boys of don Bosco knew that Jesus loved them, because they experienced it in don Bosco, who loved them all equally and unconditionally.

Among those boys, some felt called to continue the work of their beloved priest, apostle of the Youth, as Salesians, while others felt called to marriage to start a family of their own, the DOMESTIC CHURCH, where they would be the FIRST TEACHERS of the faith to their children, as don Bosco had done with them.

The Salesian Priests at our parish of St. Benedict, continue the mission of their founder, St. John Bosco, among the Young, the families, the elderly, the sick and suffering. THEY DO IT WITH SELFLESS LOVE AND DEDICATION, BECAUSE THEY LOVE JESUS.

DON BOSCO'S MOTTO IS ALSO THEIRS:

“Da mihi animas, coetera tolle”, Latin phrase for “LORD, GIVE ME SOULS, AND TAKE AWAY THE REST”.

We are so blessed. To have them. Let us love our Priests, let us support them, and let us always pray for them.