

## V. FORMATION OF THE SALESIANS THROUGH CONFERENCES AND DREAM ACCOUNTS

*The years of foundation and consolidation of the Salesian Society and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians are ones where Don Bosco's horizons expanded in an impressive manner. The priest of Valdocco, ever more aware of having received a divine mission, feels that he has been transported into a huge field of activity, given a charism that makes him father and founder of a movement of apostles, consecrated men and women who are destined to spread over space and time. His spiritual magisterium deepens, his proposals become more radical, all-embracing.*

*The texts included here are taken from notes made during Don Bosco's conferences. They are simply examples. As with the circular and personal letters, on these occasions too the saint emphasises what he considers to be characteristic aspects of Salesian consecrated life, with the freshness and liveliness typical of direct speech.*

*These addresses further confirm the total understanding Don Bosco has of consecration and the Salesian vocation, which ask for generous and determined commitment.*

*The reader can see that the dreams addressed to the Salesians (nos. 263-265), compared with those to the boys, along with their instructive and symbolic function, involve a more marked spiritual and charismatic purpose. In particular the dream of the ten diamonds (no. 265), which presents the icon of the ideal Salesian, showing what is specific to the Salesian spirit, "more than a feature or virtue, it is a range of attitudes, deep convictions and well tested methodological experiences which flow harmonically into the creation of an original and particular style of holiness and apostolate."<sup>57</sup>*

<sup>57</sup> Egidio VIGANÒ, *The profile of the Salesian in the dream of the Ten Diamonds*, in "Acts of the Superior Council" 62 (1981) no. 300, 27-28.

**258. You must act in such a way that others,  
mirroring themselves in you, can be built up**

ASC A0040601 *Cronaca 1858...*, ms by Giovanni Bonetti, pp. 17-19 (cf. MB VI, 68-70).

[October/November 1858]<sup>58</sup>

We can now say that our school year has begun, and therefore I would very much like to begin as we did last year by spending some time with you at least once a week. The best time we can find is this hour after prayers. I do not want to give you a sermon, but I only want to tell you, and I desire this with all my heart, I only want to recommend what was so often said by St Paul, indeed what God himself said to Moses when he came down from the mountain, that you be models, that you be true models for all the boys at the Oratory. You have to be like so many straight lines that all the other boys can follow along. Therefore you have to act in such a way that others, mirroring themselves in you, can be built up. You should try not only to help one another with advice but with deeds. What value would it be if you recommended to others to frequent the holy sacraments, if they saw that you went very rarely? If they see you go devoutly to the sacraments, if they see you devout and modest in church who knows then that by your example they may find somewhere to draw sustenance for their souls. If unfortunately a cleric were to engage in immodest talk, let slip some little word that someone interprets as against the beautiful virtue, alas, what damage, what a scandal! ...

People expect good results from us, people look at us and if they do not see some result, oh what a scandal for them! St Ambrose likens us to the moon. He says we must take so much care. The moon does not shine with its own light. It takes its light from the sun, uses it then gives it to the earth. We are the same. Of ourselves we have nothing, but we must take from almighty God, from the sun of justice, the divine word that enlightens the mind and after using it for ourselves then we must spread it for all men. They expect that we will lead them on the way that leads to heaven. Saint Augustine [says]: “Do

<sup>58</sup> This is a conference given to a restricted group of clerics at the Oratory to whom – the following year – he proposed that they become members of the Salesian Society.

you want to know what those robes the Romans wear mean? Do not believe that the toga a young man took on at 17 years of age only meant this but rather that under the toga was knowledge, virtue, in short all the good gifts that someone who wants to put on the toga must be adorned with. It is the same with us. Under these clothes we must have the virtues that such a divine habit deserves.”

When Joshua had to cross the Jordan, God asked him to follow the priests with the ark [of the Covenant]. When they arrived there with the ark on their shoulders, the waters of the Jordan opened up and the army passed through. That is what the priests did. Carrying the ark on their shoulders the waters divided; the upper and lower waters were like a high wall and left a path across the Jordan dry so all the army could cross to the other side of the Jordan. So must we do too. With the ark of the divine Covenant, with holy religion, good advice, nice words we must see that men pass from this world to eternity safe and sound. Onward then, and let’s do everything we can for the good of souls.

You have so many boys around you watching you carefully. Do everything in your power to direct them well and with good example, words, advice and charitable warnings. If you do that this year, although with a fewer number of clerics than other years, I will be very happy and the Lord can do no other than bless me, you, the whole House, continuing, as he has always done up till now, to help us by the power of his arm, blessing all our efforts. Amen.

### **259. After the first religious profession of the Salesians**

ASC A0040604 *Annali* III 1862, ms by Giovanni Bonetti, pp. 1-6 (cf. MB VII, 162-164)<sup>59</sup>.

[14 May 1862]

It is my intention that this vow you have just made does not impose any other obligation than observing what you have already observed up till now,

<sup>59</sup> Fr Bonetti introduces Don Bosco’s talk with these words: “A good number of us then took our vows, in accordance with the Rule. Since there were many of us we said the formula together, repeating it after Fr Rua. After that, Don Bosco addressed some words to us for our peace of mind, and to infuse in us greater courage for the future. Amongst other things he told us ...” (A0040604 *Annali* III 1862..., p. 1).

that is, the rules of the house. It is my great desire that none of you be caught up in any fear, or by some concern. If that is the case let each one come to me quickly and open up his heart, letting me know of his doubts and anxieties. I say this because it could be that the devil, seeing the good that you are doing by being in this Society, gives you some temptation, seeking to distance you from God's will. But if you quickly let me know I will be able to look at things, return your hearts to peace, and also release you from your vows if I see that this is God's will and for the good of souls.

Someone might say to me: "Did Don Bosco also make these vows?" Well, while you were making these vows to me, I was making them to the One on the Crucifix, for all of my life, offering myself in sacrifice to the Lord, ready for anything that is for his greater glory and the salvation of souls.

My dear friends we are in troubled times and it almost seems to be a presumption in these unfortunate times to be trying to put into place a new religious community, while the world and Hell are using all their powers to wipe out all those already on this earth. But that does not matter; I have not just probable but certain arguments that it is God's will that our Society begin and continue. Many efforts have been made to prevent it, but all in vain. Indeed some of those who have most obstinately opposed us have paid dearly for it. One distinguished person, who for various reasons I shall not name, maybe out of zeal, was strongly opposed to this Society. He was overcome by serious illness and a few days later left for eternity.

I would never be able to finish this evening if I were to tell you about all the special acts of protection we have received from Heaven since our Oratory began. All this helps us argue that God is with us and that we can go ahead in all our affairs with trust, knowing that we are doing his holy will.

But these are not the arguments that give me hope that all is well for this Society; there are other more important arguments, amongst them being the unique purpose we propose, which is the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. Who knows, but that the Lord may want to use our Society to accomplish much good in his Church? Twenty five or thirty years hence, if the Lord continues to help us as he has until now, our Society,

spread everywhere, could even go beyond a thousand members. Some of these preaching and instructing ordinary folk, others educating abandoned youth; some teaching, others writing and spreading good books; and everyone supporting the dignity of the Roman Pontiff and ministers of the Church. How much good can be done! Pius IX believes that everything is already sorted out: and here this evening things are in order, so let us fight with him on behalf of the Church, which is God's Church. Let us have courage, let us work with all our heart. God will reward us as a good paymaster. Eternity will be long enough for us to take a rest<sup>60</sup>.

### **260. Always keep in mind the purpose of the Congregation**

ASC A0250202 *Conferenza di D. Bosco – 12 January 1873*;

ms by another (cf. MB X, 1061-1063).

[12 January 1873]

I see with great pleasure that our Congregation is increasing every day.... But if it is my greatest desire that our Congregation should grow and increase the number of sons of the apostles, it is also my greatest desire that the members be zealous ministers, sons worthy of St Francis, just as the Jesuits are sons worthy of the courageous St Ignatius of Loyola. The whole world marvels at it and more than anyone else, the evildoers. Out of devilish hatred they would like to see this most holy seed crushed. Persecutions, the most horrendous events will not discourage these magnanimous individuals. They are split up in a way that one does not know about the other, and even though far from one another they perfectly fulfil the Rule given them by their first superior, just as it would be if they were in community. Wherever there is a Jesuit, I say, there is a model of virtue, an exemplar of holiness: there he preaches, hears confessions, proclaims the Word of God. Is there more? When evildoers think they have crushed them, that is precisely when they begin to increase in number; and it is then that the result in terms of souls is greater.

<sup>60</sup> Fr Bonetti concludes by noting: "We saw that this evening Don Bosco was happy beyond expression, did not want to leave us, assuring us he could have spent the whole night in conversation. He told us so many wonderful things especially about the beginnings of the Oratory. He told us of the tragic end of certain individuals who wanted to stop him from gathering boys etc." (A0040604 *Annali* III 1862..., p. 6).

So may it be for you, my sons, so think seriously about the state to which God is calling you; think and pray, and when entering this Congregation mirror in yourselves those magnanimous sons of Christ, and work as they do. Whether you have embraced the ecclesiastical state or remained a layman and whatever office you are given, always see to exact observance of the Rule. Whether you live here, at Lanzo, in one of the other houses, or in France, in Africa, in America, whether you are alone or with others, always keep in mind the purpose of this Congregation, the education of youth and our neighbour in general, in arts, sciences and religion; in a word, the salvation of souls. And if I should say what is currently going through my mind, I would describe a huge number of Oratories spread over the world, some in France, some in Spain, some in Africa, some in America and in so many other places where our confreres are working tirelessly in the vineyard of Jesus Christ.

Right now it is simply a thought I have, but it seems to me I could already assert it as an historical fact. But since the Holy Father, Pius IX, has urged us to take up only Italy as our field of work for now, since, as he says, it is extremely in need, we will put our forces to work here in Italy. However Heaven should dispose things, always remember the purpose of the Congregation you will join or have already joined. Let us encourage one another and work tirelessly together so that one day, in company with all the souls we have won for God, we will enjoy the beatific vision of God with them for all eternity.

### **261. Through our vows we are all completely consecrated to God**

ASC A0000409 *Prediche di don Bosco. Esercizi Lanzo 1876*, Quad. 20, ms by Giulio Barberis, pp. 14-19 (cf. MB XII, 451-454)<sup>61</sup>.

[Lanzo Torinese, 17 September 1876]

<sup>61</sup> This is a reflection Don Bosco gave after the profession of vows, at the end of the first of a series of retreats, in September 1876. Fr Barberis introduces Don Bosco's address with these words: "On September 17 it was the day for taking vows for those who had not yet done so and wished to do so. After some recreation after breakfast, at 9:30, we went into the church. Because it was Sunday a second Mass was said, and at the same time we sang the Office, then finished by reading the Rule. Meanwhile the *Veni Creator* was intoned and all those admitted to vows went into the sacristy; there were 20 for perpetuals and 15 for triennials .... When we had finished pronouncing the vows, Don Bosco, already seated on the chair, began a beautiful sermon, part of which I recall I reproduce here" (A0000409 *Prediche di don Bosco...*, p. 14).

When an army general sees all his ranks of soldiers, he is happy because he hopes he can more easily destroy his enemy with them, without any fear. So right now I am happy seeing the ranks of my sons increase, soldiers who want to fight the devil; soldiers who will help me destroy, as much as we can, his kingdom on earth and prepare a nice place for ourselves in Heaven.

Do you know what it means to make these holy vows? It means being put in the first ranks of the Divine Saviour's army and to go into battle under his command. But what I would like to say to you right now is this, that it is not enough to make vows, but we must make every effort to do what we have promised God to do by vow. Through our vows we are all completely consecrated to him; let us never take back what we have given him. We have consecrated our eyes to him: so let's leave aside useless and insignificant reading, vain or bad looks. We have all consecrated our ears to God: so let's not pause any longer to listen to people complaining and sowing discontent, no longer want pleasures or be found in conversations, gatherings where, even if there is no bad talk, it is all very worldly and secular just the same. We have consecrated our tongue to the Lord: so no more biting or rude words to our friends, answering superiors back, no more sowing discontent; no, now that we have consecrated it to him, let us not stain it any more; instead give it completely over to singing the divine praises, talking of good examples to encourage others to do good. We have consecrated our throat [appetite] to the Lord, so away with all kinds of immoderate delicacies in food; much abstemiousness with wine; never let our greedy appetite lead us to accept dinners, drinks or the like. These hands of ours have been especially consecrated to the Lord, so let them no longer remain idle; let them not regret doing work which seems to be filthy work, so long as everything is for the greater glory of God. All these feet are consecrated to God: what a field I am entering here! So let's not use these feet to return to the world which we have abandoned. Yes, I think I should stay with this idea for a moment to deal with it.

The Lord has given us a great grace by calling us to follow him: this world is too perverse and perverting. So let us follow the grace and not return to perversion. See, the Holy Spirit clearly tells us that the world is completely

set on evil: *“mundus in maligno positus est totus”* [1 Jn 5:19]. So let us see that our feet never turn back again to where we have escaped from. The principal hurdle, the biggest difficulty we find is our parents. But the Lord said that if they become a hurdle to our greater good we do not need to listen to them, nor heed them, he even goes to the point of telling us to hate them. So we need to really detach ourselves from them, since God has done us the great favour of calling us to follow him. Through our vows we have detached ourselves from them to bind ourselves especially to God, so why put ourselves back in danger of detaching ourselves from God by going to listen to their miseries, needs or desires?

I see that I have digressed somewhat from what I was talking about, that since we are especially consecrated to God we should give him our whole life, all our works, our entire selves. We have to really try hard so that the fact, our works, corresponds to this purpose. Believe me also that there has never been anybody who was discontent at the moment of death for being consecrated to God and for having spent his life in his holy service. There are countless numbers, instead, who at that point regret that they have not loved him and served him. They weep over their miseries but time has run out. Since the Lord in his great mercy has wanted to warn us in time and call us to himself, let us surrender to him and do things worthy of his call.

## 262. Patience, Hope, Obedience

ASC A0000409 *Prediche di don Bosco - Esercizi Lanzo 1876*, Quad. XX, ms by Giulio Barberis, pp. 1-11 (cf. MB XII, 454-460).

[Lanzo Torinese, 18 September 1876]

We are at the point of going our own way and each one will be going back to where the Lord has destined him to exercise his sacred ministry. What can I tell you at this moment that can serve as a watchword for each one to recall as fruit of this retreat wherever and whenever? There are three simple words that I believe are of the greatest importance possible right now. So it would be good to heed them with all the effort possible. Here they are: *Patience, Hope, Obedience*.



[1. *Patience*] - Firstly I would like to suggest much patience. The Holy Spirit himself admonishes us: “*Patientia vobis necessaria est*” [Heb 10:36]. he tells us somewhere in Holy Scripture. “*In patientia vestra,*” he says elsewhere, “*possidebitis animas vestras* [Lk 21:19]. *Patientia opus habet perfectum*” [Jas 1:4]. I do not intend here to speak of the patience required to put up with fatigue or extraordinary persecutions; nor of the patience needed to suffer martyrdom nor that which we need to practise when seriously ill. Patience is certainly necessary in these cases and to an heroic degree; but they are cases that rarely have to be put into practice, and God in these cases gives us extraordinary graces. The patience I intend speaking of is the patience needed to fulfil our duties well, the patience we need to practise all of our Rule, discharge our duties exactly. This is what I intend to speak to you about. Both superiors and inferiors need it, and it could be needed in a thousand instances, therefore we need to have it in abundance.

Someone will be overburdened with tasks and someone else wants to give him one more. He could be angry with the one who wants to do this, either because that person seems unaware of the other things he has to do or because he just believes he can do it. Patience is needed.

Or there could be someone else who wants to teach, but they ask him to assist; or there might be someone instead who wants to go to school but they ask him to teach, or he’d like to be in one place but they send him to another. Patience is needed in all these cases.

Or there is someone who believes the Superior has something against him, does not view him favourably, always gives him the worst jobs to do. Without patience he immediately begins to complain, show his discontent, and what will happen?

Or someone else has a job he does not like, or he can’t do well where he is; he feels like complaining a thousand times over about everything there and going who knows where to. Take this kind of response slowly: here patience is needed more than ever.

Or it will happen one day that someone says: “the Superior hates me”; it might be imagination more than anything else; but even so, is it legitimate to

complain, speak badly of him, show publicly how offended he is? No. This is why I was saying that we need to have patience as our inseparable companion.

And the Superior? How much patience is needed here! Because if he knows how to get others to practise it, the others can say: there's many of us, he is just one, and we are practising a bit of patience towards each one. The Superior though is alone and apart from all the others and has to be patient with everyone. So although he might be young, sometimes it is very tough work. Sometimes has to chew on things for a while a little out of regard for one or some other, either because they are not capable, or because he does not see good will and spontaneity in things, or even sees ill will. But is this good enough to cut off relations with someone regarding that matter and complain about everything? I know that there will be a thousand temptations to offer a harsh reproach or send someone away or something like that, but it is precisely here that much patience is needed or, to put it better, much charity with that condiment of St Francis de Sales added in: kindness, meekness.

The teacher, or an assistant could cut the matter off with a blow here, a kick there; but I maintain that although it might stop an occasional abuse, it never does good and never helps people love virtue or get something to sink in. Of course, let there always be true zeal. Try your best to do things well, yes. But always calmly, kindly, patiently.

Someone will say: "well said, but it costs something not to get angry when you see..." It costs. And I know it costs as well; but do you know where the word patience comes from? From [the Latin word] *patior, pateris, passus sum, pati*, which means: to suffer, put up with, endure. If it did not cost some effort it would no longer be patience. And it is precisely because it costs effort that I recommend it so much and that the Lord encourages it so much in the Holy Scriptures. I am also aware that it costs. I am sure you don't believe that it is the most enjoyable thing in the world to be 'nailed' to giving audiences or stuck at a table all evening to do what has to be done, letters and the like. I can assure you that many times I would like to get out for some fresh air and maybe I really need to; but patience is needed. If I didn't do these tasks many things wouldn't happen; so much good would be left undone; so much important business would be left stranded: therefore, patience.

Don't believe that it doesn't also cost me, that after having given someone a job to do, entrusted him with something important or delicate or urgent, and I find it not done or badly done, it doesn't cost me something to regain my calm. I assure you that sometimes my blood is boiling in my veins; I get pins and needles all over. So? Lose my patience? That won't get the job done; and the confrere will not be corrected by my anger. Calmly advise, set appropriate rules, encourage; and if there is a need to shout a bit, then do it, but think for a moment: what would St Francis de Sales do in this situation? I can assure you that if we act like this we will obtain what the Holy Spirit told us: "*In patientia vestra possidebitis animas vestras*" [Lk 21:19].

And then? It also takes patience, constancy, perseverance to carry out our Rule. The day will come when you feel tired, bored or, let's say there will be a day when you don't want to make meditation, say the rosary, go to the sacraments, continue on with your boring assistance. This is the right moment to ask the Lord and the Blessed Virgin, constantly and perseveringly, for patience.

Look how much care a gardener takes to get a little plant to grow. You might say it is effort thrown away. But he knows that over time that little plant will give him so much back, so he does not worry about the effort and begins to work and sweat to prepare the ground: digging here, hoeing there, then manuring, weeding, then planting or putting in the seed. Then, as if this were not enough, how much effort he makes seeing that nobody tramples the ground that has been planted, or that birds or hens don't come and eat the seed. When he sees it sprout he looks at it with pleasure: "oh! It's sprouting, it's got two leaves, three ..." Then think of the grafting, how much care he takes looking for the best plant in the garden, cutting a branch, binding it, covering it, seeing that cold or wet don't destroy it. When the plant grows and begins to bend over, he immediately provides a support so it can grow straight, and if he is afraid that the stem or trunk is too weak, that wind or storms could flatten it, he puts a stake next to it, ties it and binds it so that it will not run that risk. So why, my good gardener, so much care for a plant? Because if there wasn't it would not give me fruit. It is good that it is done this way: if I want it to give me plenty of good fruit then I need to look after it in every way possible.

Unfortunately, note that despite this, often the graft fails, the plant is lost; but in the hope that it can be brought back to life, so much effort is made.

We too my dear sons, are gardeners, farmers in the Lord's vineyard. If we want our work to produce results, we have to show so much care for the plants we are cultivating. Unfortunately, despite our efforts and care, our grafts dry up and the plant goes bad; but if we really do make these efforts, most times the plant succeeds ... Even though there might not be success, the master of the vineyard recompenses us, for he is so good! Bear in mind then, getting upset is not worth it, nor giving in to impulse: continual patience is needed, constancy, perseverance, effort.

[2. Hope] - The farmer at least hopes to be paid, be recompensed. And us? Who will pay us? So I begin with the second point I want to talk to you about: hope. Yes, what supports patience must be the hope of reward. We work so that the hope of reward may smile so consolingly upon us. We are lucky that we have such a good master. Note how consoling these words are: "*Quia super pauca fuisti fidelis, super multa te constituam*" [Mt 25:21], because you were faithful in small things, I will put you in charge of greater things. We poor people know so little, have so little strength, ability. It does not matter, we are faithful in doing the little we can and the Lord will give us a great reward. When, as a teacher, you are tired and you would like to let your job go, careful! Be faithful in little things if you want the Lord to give you greater things. Or the Rector! He has advised, spoken, recommended ...; he is about to lose patience or just let everything go as it likes or get angry... Careful that you be faithful in little things, if you want to be in charge of greater things.

A point where we must practise so much patience still, looking to hope, is overcoming ourselves. I mean overcoming our habits, our bad inclinations, the temptations that constantly bother us. How much it costs to leave those habits behind, our very ordinary lukewarmness, weakness, carelessness with the little practices of obedience or piety. Here too we need constant patience, extraordinary tolerance, not allowing the devil to win and, day or night, awake or asleep, playing or working, always endeavouring to overcome our bad inclinations. This is what we call patience or being long-suffering. And

if we need to struggle so much to obtain victory, we will want to look to the great reward, the great prize prepared for us and we will not fail to win out. *“In patientia vestra possidebitis animas vestras”* [Lk 21:19]. St Paul adds: *“Si vos delectat magnitudo praemiorum, non vos terreat magnitudo laborum.”*

I am not here to tell you how well our hope is founded. You know that it is our most merciful Lord that has made the promise, and for the little we are faithful in he has promised us much; he calls those who have observed his law ‘blessed’, because he knows how great the reward is. Elsewhere he tells us that even a glass of cold water given in his name will be compensated. Courage then: may hope sustain us when our courage fails us.

[3. *Obedience*] - Now, there is need for a virtue that includes these first two and keeps them together. This virtue is obedience. I will only say a few things, given that we have tackled obedience in Rodriguez at length in this retreat and that there have also been sermons on it. I really recommend that you practise patience in obeying and when this obedience does not come easily, when our thinking is far from being obedient, let us look up to Heaven, hold onto hope.

Well kept obedience is the life and soul of religious Congregations; it is what keeps them united. How much good can be done when many members depend absolutely on one, who by reason of his position has a broader view of things, can see clearly what needs to be done and tells someone: “stay here”, and he stays; do that, and he does it; “go there”, and immediately he sets out. Good is increased and it is a good that cannot be achieved unless there is absolute obedience.

What other great things obedience can bring! All your actions become more meritorious; I speak of manual activities. There might be someone who is good at little or nothing, but he puts himself under obedience and the Superior asks him to sweep or be the cook, and he can have the same merit as someone who is busy all day, labouring away in the pulpit or confessional or teaching. This great good comes to us through obedience. Let everyone be patient in the task he has, do it well as far as he can, and not give thought to anything else except that the Lord will welcome him and bless him.

I have one more idea I would very much like to recommend to you today. This thought ties the other three together. It consists in making the exercise for a happy death well each month; putting aside one day a month to leave aside, as much as is possible, all other occupations, to think about matters concerning our soul.

It will help to make comparisons month by month: did I improve this month? Or did I go back somehow? Then come to details: how was I in this virtue, that other one? And make a special review of matters to do with the vows and the practices of piety: How was I with regard to obedience? Did I make progress? - Did I carry out the assistance I was given well, for example? How did I do it? - Was I busy at school? - Regarding poverty, be it clothing, food, my cell: do I have something that is not really poor? Was I greedy? Did I complain when I lacked something? - Then come to chastity: have I given any room for bad thoughts? Have I detached myself still more from love of family? Did I practise mortification in eating, looking, etc.? - Then move on to practices of piety and note especially any lukewarmness, or if these practices were done without enthusiasm.

This examination should always be made, whether it be a long or a short one. Since some of you have occupations that do not allow you time apart any day of the month, they are legitimate occupations, but on that day let each one do what he can to follow up these indications and make particular resolutions.

Just one more little thought. When the young man asked the Lord what he had to do to be saved, he gave him the law and said: "*Fac hoc et vives* [Lk 10:28]. Do this and you will live." So I say to you: you have the Rule, it is the Lord who gave it to you; fulfil it and you will live. Let each one study it and at the same time study how to put it into practice. Let each one for his own part, superior, inferior, priest or coadjutor, try to put it into practice. How happy and consoled we will be at the moment of our death, for having practised it! We can be certain, as I was saying, that our hope will not be confounded. The Lord is faithful to his promises and he will give us whatever it is we hope for. Indeed, he is full of kindness and mercy. He will give us far more than we could imagine.

Let us have courage then. If we have to suffer something, put up with something to do everything the Lord asks of us, let us not pull back. He knows how to reward our every effort and will make us content now and in eternity, and will give us the reward that exceeds all expectation.

### 263. Humility, work and temperance

ASC A0000409 *Prediche D. Bosco. Esercizi Lanzo 1876*, Quad. XX, ms by Giulio Barberis, pp. 33-46 (cf. MB XII, 463-469)<sup>62</sup>.

28 September 1876

They say we should take no notice of dreams; and I must tell you truthfully that in most cases I am also of this opinion. However sometimes, though not telling us about the future they serve just the same in letting us know how to resolve intricate affairs and in showing us how to proceed prudently in certain matters. So they can be taken for what is good in them. Right now I would like to tell you about a dream that has preoccupied me throughout this retreat and tormented me especially last night. I will tell it to you as it happened only shortening things a bit here and there so as not to be too long, because it seems to me that it was full of many and serious lessons.

[Part I] - It seemed to me that we were all together, going from Lanzo to Turin. We were all in some kind of vehicle, but I couldn't say if we were on a train or an *omibus*, but we weren't walking. When we got to a certain point along the road, I don't recall where, the vehicle stopped. I got off to see what was wrong and found myself face to face with someone whom I cannot really describe: he looked both tall and short at the same time, fat and thin, and he also looked red and white; he walked on the ground but also in the air. I was dumbfounded and could make no sense of it, but plucked up courage and asked: "Who are you?" Without giving me an answer he said: "Come." I wanted to know who he was first of all, what he wanted, but again he said: "Come quickly; let's get the vehicles moving into this field."

<sup>62</sup> The concluding sermon (the "reminders") given at the end of the second lot of retreats at Lanzo Torinese, 20-28 September 1876.

The marvel was that he spoke loudly and softly at the same time and in many voices, and I was just left marvelling at it all. The field was very big, as far as you could see, all flat, not dug up but all flattened down like a farmyard. Not knowing what to say, and seeing him so resolute, we turned the vehicles around so that they entered that huge field and then we shouted out to everyone inside to get off. They all got off in very quick time and as soon as they had, the vehicles were seen to vanish, without our knowing where they had gone to.

“Now that we have got down,” I whispered to myself, “you will tell why you made us stop in this place.” He answered: “The reason is serious; it is to avoid a terrible danger.”

“Which danger?”

“Danger from a wild bull that will leave no one alive if he comes through: *Taurus rugiens quaerens quem devoret.*”

“Slow down, my friend, you are attributing to the bull what St Peter says about the lion in Holy Scripture: *Leo rugiens*” [1 Pet 5:8].

“That doesn’t matter: there it was *leo rugiens*, here it is *taurus rugiens.*”

“The fact is that you have to be very much on the alert. Call everyone to come around you. Then solemnly and urgently announce that they be careful, very careful, and as soon as they hear the bull bellowing, a loud and extraordinary bellowing, to immediately throw themselves on the ground and stay face down, faces pressed to the ground, until the bull has passed through. Woe to the one who does not listen to you, for whoever does not lie flat on the ground face down as I have said will be lost, because we read in the Holy Scriptures that the one who is humble will be exalted and the one who exalts himself will be humbled: *Qui se humiliat exaltabitur et qui se exaltat humiliabitur*” [Lk 14:11].

Then he said once more: “Quickly, quickly: the bull is about to come; shout, shout out loudly for them to get down.”



I was shouting and he was saying: “More, more, louder, shout, shout”. I was shouting so loud that I think I even frightened Fr Lemoyne who sleeps in the room next to me, but I couldn’t shout any louder.

Then immediately we heard the bellowing of the bull: “Careful, careful!... Line them all up straight next to each on both sides, with a space in the middle for the bull to run through.”

I’m shouting and giving these orders; in the blink of an eyelid they are all prostrate on the ground and we began to see the bull coming from way off, enraged.

Although most were lying face down, some wanted to stand up and watch the bull to see what it was and they were not lying down. Just a few of them. The individual said to me: “Now you will see what happens to them; you will see what they get for not lowering themselves.” I wanted to warn them again, shout at them, run to them. The other would not let me. I insisted that he let me go to them. He told me firmly: “Obedience is for you too, get down”. I was still not lying down when we heard this tremendous, fearful bellowing. The bull was already close to us; we were all shaking and asking: “What the... what the...” “Don’t be afraid: down on the ground!”. And he kept shouting: “*Qui se humiliat exaltabitur et qui se exaltat humiliabitur... qui se humiliat... qui se humiliat.*”

A strange thing that really made me wonder was this, that although my head was on the ground and I was completely prostrate with my eyes in the dust, nevertheless I could see everything that was happening around me very well. The bull had seven horns, almost in the shape of a circle: there were two in place of his nose; two in place of his eyes; two where the horns would ordinarily be and one above; but the marvellous thing was that these horns were so strong, flexible, bending in whichever direction, so that to strike or knock someone to the ground the bull didn’t have to run here or there; it just needed to move ahead without twisting and turning itself, to strike whoever it encountered. The horns at the nose were the longest and these caused surprising damage.

The bull was already very close; then the individual shouted: “watch the effect of humility.” And then suddenly, what a marvel it was! We all found ourselves lifted up in the air to a considerable height so it was impossible for the bull to reach us. The handful who had not got down were not lifted up. The bull came and tore them to pieces in an instant; not one was saved. We meanwhile, lifted up in the air, were terrified and said: “If we fall down we’re done for; poor us! What will become of us!” Meanwhile we could see the enraged bull trying to get to us. He was leaping up terribly trying to gore us, but he was not able to do any damage to us. So more enraged than ever, he made it clear he wanted to go and find some fellow bulls; almost as if he were saying: “well, we’ll help each other, we will climb up...”, and so *habens iram magnam* [Rev 12:12], he went off.

Then we found ourselves back on the ground and the person was shouting: “Face the south.” Then, without our understanding what was going on, the scene in front of us changed. Facing south we saw the Blessed Sacrament exposed: there were many candles lit on both sides and the field was no longer there, but we seemed to be in a huge, ornately decorated church. While we were all there in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, many enraged bulls arrived, all with horrible horns and terribly frightening in appearance. They came, but since we were in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, they could do no harm to us. Meanwhile we were saying the chaplet to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. After a while, I don’t know how long, we looked and the bulls were no longer there. Looking back towards the altar we found that the candles were extinguished, the Sacrament no longer exposed, the church had gone ... “But where are we?” We found ourselves in the field where we had first been.

You understand well enough that the bull is the enemy of our souls, the devil that is so enraged with us and constantly seeks to do us harm. The seven horns are the seven capital vices. What can free us from this bull’s horns, from the devil’s assaults, from not falling to vice, is principally humility, basis and foundation of the virtues.

[Part 2] - Meanwhile we were dumbfounded, amazed, looking at one another. No one was speaking, no one knew what to say. They were waiting for

Don Bosco to speak or for that individual to tell us something when, taking me aside, he said: "Come, I want you to see the triumph of the Congregation of St Francis de Sales. Climb up on this rock and you will see." It was a huge boulder in the middle of the boundless field so I climbed up on it. What an immense view confronted me! The field, that I could never have believed could be so large, looked to me as if it covered the entire earth. People of every colour, dress, nation were gathered there. I saw so many people that I did not know if the world could have that many. I began by looking at the ones in front as I looked at them: they were dressed like us Italians. I knew the ones in the front rows and there were so many Salesians there who were leading groups of boys and girls by the hand. Then there were others with other groups; then still more and more that I no longer knew and could not make out, but there was an indescribable number of them. Towards the south there were Sicilians, Africans and an endless crowd of people I didn't know. They were all being led by Salesians; those in the front rows I knew and then no more.

"Note", the person said to me. Then an endless crowd of other people appeared before me, dressed differently from us. They wore skins, kinds of mantles that looked almost like velvet, all in different colours. I turned to the four points of the compass. Amongst other things, to the east I saw women with feet so tiny that they struggled to remain standing and almost could not walk. What stood out was that everywhere I saw Salesians leading groups of boys and girls and with them a huge crowd of people. I always knew the ones in the first rows, then going on further, I did not know them any more, not even the missionaries. There are many things here that I cannot tell you at length because it would take too long.

Then the one who had led me and advised me up to this point about what I had to do, spoke again and said: "Look, Don Bosco; for now you will not understand everything I say, but pay attention: everything you have seen is all the harvest prepared for the Salesians. See how huge this harvest is! This huge field you find yourself in is the field in which the Salesians must work. The Salesians you see are the workers in the Lord's vineyard. Many are working and you know them. The horizon then broadened before your eyes with people that you do not yet know, and this means that not only in this century, but in

the next and in future centuries the Salesians will work in their field. But do you know on what condition what you see will happen? I will tell you: look, you need to print the Rule and on the first page, in large letters, remember, print the words that will be your coat of arms, your rallying cry, your badge. Note well: *Work and temperance will make the Salesian Congregation flourish*. You will explain these words; repeat them, insist on them. You will have a handbook printed that explains them and makes it well understood that work and temperance are the legacy you leave the Congregation and at the same time will also be its glory.”

I replied: “I will do this willingly enough; all this is according to our purpose and what I am already recommending every day and insisting on, every occasion I can.”

“Are you convinced then? Have you understood it well? This is the legacy you will leave them; and say clearly that while your sons follow this, they will have followers from the south, north, east and west. Now leave the Retreat and send them off to their destinations. These will follow the rules, then others will come”.

Then the vehicles appeared once again to take us on to Turin. I was looking and looking: they were omnibuses, but *sui generis*, strange as could be. We began to get on; but the omnibuses had no supports of any kind and I was afraid they would fall off, so I didn't want to let them leave. But the person said to me: “Go, go: they don't need support, they just need to carry out these words: *Sobrii estote et vigilate*” [1 Pet 5:8]. Whoever carries out these two things will not fall, even though there is no support and the carriage is running fast.

[Part 3] - They leave.

The carriage set off fast and I was with the individual. “Come,” he soon said to me, “Come, because I want to show you the most important part.” You have something to learn! So, do you see that large cart?”

“I can see it.”

“Do you know what it is?”

“I can’t see it well.”

“If you want to see it well, come up close. Do you see that poster there? Come up and look at it: there is an emblem on the poster, and that will tell you the rest.”

I came up and saw four very large nails painted on the poster. I turned to him saying:

“I don’t understand anything unless you explain it!”

“Don’t you see those four nails?” I looked carefully. “Those are the four nails that drilled into and tormented our Divine Saviour so much.”

“And by that you mean?”

“They are four nails that torment religious congregations. If you avoid these four nails, meaning, that your congregation is not tormented by them, you keep them far away, then things will go well, you will be saved.”

“But as I said before, What do these nails mean?”

“If you want to know better, have a closer look at the large carriage with the emblem on it. See, this carriage has four compartments, each corresponding to a nail.”

“But what do these compartments mean?”

“Observe that at each one’s entrance there is a poster with an inscription that explains everything.”

I observed the first compartment; I read the poster: *Quorum Deus venter est* [Phil 3:19].

“Now I begin to understand something.”

Then he replied:

“This is the first nail that torments and sends religious congregations to their ruin. It will also decimate you, unless you are careful. Fight against it well and you will see that things will prosper.”

“Now let’s come to the second compartment. Read the inscription for the second nail: *Quaerunt quae sua sunt non quae Iesu Christi* [Phil 2:21]. Here are the ones who seek their own comforts, ease and own interests or perhaps those of their family, and they do not seek the good of the Congregation which is the portion of Jesus Christ. Be careful, keep this scourge away and you will see the Congregation prosper.”

Third compartment. Observe the inscription for the third nail, it says: *‘Aspidis lingua eorum*. A fatal nail for Congregations: complaining, gossip, those who seek to criticise rightly or wrongly.”

Fourth compartment: *‘Cubiculum otiositatis*. Here are the idle ones in large numbers; when idleness starts to enter, the community will be ruined; instead, as long as it keeps working hard, you will be in no danger.”

“Now observe one more thing in this carriage, which very many take no notice of but I want you to give it very special attention. Do you see that closet that is not part of any compartment, but sticks out a little in all of them? Observe it well: it is like a half compartment or area.”

“I see, but there is only a heap of weeds, tall grass, some cut, tangled.”

“Good, good: this is what I want you to observe.”

“What can I draw from this?”

“Observe well the inscription that is almost hidden.”

I did observe it well and I saw written: *Latet anguis in herba*. “And what is that about?”

“Look, there are certain individuals who lie hidden; they say nothing but talk amongst themselves. Be careful: *latet anguis in herba*. They are a real scourge, real plagues in the Congregation. Bad as they are, if they could be uncovered, they could be corrected. But no, they remain hidden. We don’t notice them and meanwhile things get worse; the poison spreads in their heart and when they eventually become known there is no more time to repair the damage they have already wrought. So learn the things well that you need to keep far away from the Congregation. Keep what you have seen well in mind.

See that these things are explained and explained again at length. By doing so you can be at peace about your Congregation knowing that things will thrive, one day being better than the other.”

I asked him then, so I would not forget any of the the things he had told me, if I could have some time to write them down. “If you wish to try,” he answered, “then write them down; but I fear you have little time. Be careful.”

While he was saying this and I was getting ready to write, I thought I heard a strange noise, agitation all around me. It seemed that the ground below me was shaking. So I looked around to see if something else was happening again and I saw some young people, who had left just a bit earlier, running back to me terrified from everywhere, and then immediately the bellowing of the bull. It was the same bull following them. When the bull reappeared, I was so scared at the sight of it that I woke up.

I have told you this dream now, before you leave, convinced that in all truth it would be a worthy conclusion to the Retreat if we would decide to keep to our motto: *Work and Temperance*; if we all do our best to avoid the four large nails that destroy Congregations: the vice of greed; seeking an easy life; complaining and idleness; to which we should add that each one must be open, frank and confident with his superiors. This way we will do good for our souls and at the same time can also save those entrusted to our care by Divine Providence.

If we wanted to give a special reminder that can serve throughout this year, it would be: seek every way of preserving the queen of virtues, the virtue that safeguards all others; and if we have it, it will never be alone, in fact it will be accompanied by all the others; if we lose it, the others will either not be there at all or will soon be lost. Love this virtue, love it a lot and remember that to keep it you must work and pray: *Non eicitur nisi in jejunio et oratione* [Mt 17:20].

Yes, *prayer* and *mortification*. Especially mortification in looks, in rest, food and especially wine. Not seeking comforts for our bodies, indeed I would almost say mistreating them. No special treatment other than what is necessary; when health demands it, yes. Give the body what is strictly necessary and no

more; because, as St Paul used to say: “*Corpus hoc quod corrumpitur aggravat animam*” [Wis 9:15]. Yes! What did St Paul do? “*Castigo corpus meum et in servitatem redigo ut spiritui inserviat*” [1 Cor 9:27].

So I recommend here what I recommended at the end of the other Retreats: obedience, patience, hope. The other thing is the humility we need to have and inculcate in our young people and others, virtues that would ordinarily be called the foundation of Christian living and perfection.

### **264. Future matters for vocations**

Critical ed. in C. ROMERO, *I sogni di Don Bosco...*, pp. 51-57.

9 May 1879

A huge long battle between our boys and all kinds of other warriors, various kinds with strange weapons. At the end few survived.

Another more intense and horrible battle took place between gigantic monsters and well-armed, well-practised very tall men. They carried a very high, broad standard at the centre of which, written in gold, were these words: *Maria Auxilium Christianorum*. The battle was long and bloody. It was as if those following the standard were invulnerable and they remained masters of the huge plain. They were joined by the youngsters who had survived the previous battle and together they made up a kind of army, each with a crucifix in his right hand as a weapon, and in his left a small standard of Mary Help of Christians, modelled on the one above.

The new soldiers held many manoeuvres on that vast plain, then they split up and left, some to the West, others to the East, a few to the North, many to the South.

Once they had gone the same battles reoccurred, the same manoeuvres and same departures in the same directions.

I knew many of them from the earlier scuffles; the ones that followed were unknown to me but they let me know that they knew me and they asked me many questions.



Then a shower of bright flames came down; it looked like fire of many colours. There was thunder then the sky cleared and I found myself in a lovely garden. A man who looked like St Francis de Sales offered me a book, without saying anything. I asked him who he was. “Read the book”, he answered. I opened the book but it was difficult to read. However I managed to identify these precise words:

*For the novices:* Obedience and diligence in everything. By their obedience they will deserve the Lord’s blessings and the good will of men. By their diligence they will combat and conquer the snares of spiritual enemies.

*For the professed:* Jealously safeguard the virtue of chastity. Love the good name of the confreres and promote the dignity of the Congregation.

*For the Rectors:* Every care, every effort to observe the Rule and see that the Rule by which everyone is consecrated to God is observed.

*For the Superior:* Total offering of himself to see that he wins both himself and his subjects over to God.

Many other things were printed in the book, but I couldn’t read them because the paper seemed as blue as the ink.

“Who are you?” I asked the man again as he stood there calmly looking at me.

“My name is known to all the good, and I have been sent to tell you some things about the future.”

“What things?”

“Those written down and others you will ask me about.”

“What should I do to promote vocations?”

“The Salesians will have many vocations through their exemplary conduct, by treating their pupils with the greatest charity and insisting on frequent Communion.”

“What should be observed in accepting novices?”

“Exclude the lazy and the greedy.”

“And accepting for vows?”

“See that they have a guarantee of being chaste.”

“How do we best preserve a good spirit in our houses?”

“Write, visit, receive and deal with people kindly, and very often in the case of the first superiors.”

“How should we go about the missions?”

“Send individuals whose morality is secure; call back anyone who gives you cause for serious doubts; work at and cultivate indigenous vocations.”

“Is our Congregation going well?”

*“Qui iustus est, iustificetur adhuc [Rev 22:11]; Non progredi est regredi: Qui perseveraverit salvus erit” [Mt 24:13].*

“Will it expand much?”

“As long as the superiors do their part it will grow and no one will be able to stop it from spreading.”

“Will it last a long time?”

“The Congregation will last so long as its members love work and temperance. If one of these two pillars is missing your building will collapse around your superiors and inferiors and their followers.”

Just then four individuals appeared carrying a bier and walking towards me.

“What is this for?” I asked.

“For you.”

“Soon?”

“Don’t ask, just remember that you are mortal.”

“What do you want to signify by this coffin?”

“That you must practise in life what you want your sons to practise after you. This is the legacy, the testament you must leave your sons; but you must prepare it and leave it well accomplished and practised.”

“Will flowers or thorns dominate?”

“There will be many roses, many consolations but some very prickly thorns are imminent and they will bring much bitterness and sorrow. You need to pray a lot.”

“Should we go to Rome?”

“Yes, but slowly, with the greatest prudence and exquisite caution.”

“Is the end of my mortal life imminent?”

“Don’t worry about this. You have the Rule, books, do what you teach others to do. Be vigilant.”

I wanted to ask other questions, but there was a thunderstorm and lightning, and some men, or I should really say terrible monsters were rushing towards me to tear me to pieces. Just then everything went dark and I could see nothing. I thought I was dead and I began shouting out wildly. I awoke and found myself still alive. It was a quarter to five in the morning.

If there is something there that could be to your advantage, take it.

In everything, honour and glory to God forever and ever.

## 265. The ten diamonds

Critical ed. in C. ROMERO, *I sogni di Don Bosco...*, pp. 63-71<sup>63</sup>.

[San Benigno Canavese, 10-11 September 1881]

*Spiritus Sancti gratia illuminet sensus et corda nostra. Amen*

On the night of September 10 (1881), the day the holy Church consecrates to the holy name of Mary, the Salesians gathered at San Benigno Canavese were making their Retreat. On the night of the 10th, while I was sleeping, I

<sup>63</sup> Also called “the dream of San Benigno Canavese”; one of the most important texts for Salesian spirituality.

found myself in a large and splendidly ornate hall. I seemed to be walking up and down with the Rectors of our houses when a man appeared amongst us of such majestic mien that we could not keep our eyes fixed on him. He gazed at us, then without a word began to take a few paces ahead of us.

He wore an imposing mantle with a stole-like collar tied at the neck with a ribbon that hung down in front. On the stole was written in luminous characters: *Pia Salesianorum Societas anno 1881*, and on the ribbon: *Qualis esse debet*.

The august personage wore ten huge diamonds of extraordinary splendour which was what prevented us from fixing our gaze on him, except with out great effort.

Three of the diamonds were on his breast and on one was inscribed *Fides*, on another *Spes* and *Charitas* was inscribed on the one over his heart. The fourth diamond was on the right shoulder where *Labor* was inscribed; over the fifth on the left shoulder one could read *Temperantia*.

The other five diamonds adorned the back of the mantle and were arranged thus: one very large and brighter one was in the middle, like at the centre of a square, and it bore the inscription *Obedientia*. On the first on the right one could read *Votum Paupertatis*. On the second a little lower, *Praemium*. On the left higher up was inscribed *Votum Castitatis* with a dazzling splendour all of its own and looking at it attracted and held the attention like a magnet attracts metal. On the second on the left lower down was written *Ieiunium*. All four of these directed their rays of light towards the diamond at the centre.

*Explanation* - To avoid confusion it should be noted that each diamond had rays like flames small tongues of flame on which various texts could be read: *Faith* carried the words: *Sumite scutum fidei ut adversus insidias diaboli certare possitis*<sup>64</sup>. Another ray had: *Fides sine operibus mortua est*<sup>65</sup>. *Non auditores, sed factores legis regnum Dei possidebunt*<sup>66</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> Carry the shield of faith, in order to fight against the wiles of the devil (cf. Eph 6:16).

<sup>65</sup> Faith without works is dead (Ja 2:20).

<sup>66</sup> It is not listening to the Law of God but keeping it that will make people holy in the sight of God (cf. Rm 2:13).

On the rays of *Hope*: *Sperate in Domino, non in hominibus*<sup>67</sup>. *Semper vestra fixa sint corda ubi vera sunt gaudia*<sup>68</sup>.

On the rays of *Charity*: *Alter alterius onera portate si vultis adimplere legem meam*<sup>69</sup>. *Diligite et diligemini. Sed diligite animas vestras et vestrorum*<sup>70</sup>. *Devote divinum officium persolvatur; Missa attente celebretur; Sanctum Sanctorum peramanter visitetur*<sup>71</sup>.

On the word *Labour*: *Remedium concupiscentiae; Arma potens contra omnes insidias diaboli*<sup>72</sup>.

On *Temperance*: *Si lignum tollis, ignis extinguitur*<sup>73</sup>. *Pactum constitue cum oculis tuis, cum gula, cum somno, ne huiusmodi inimici depraedentur animas vestras*<sup>74</sup>. *Intemperantia et castitas non possunt simul cohabitare*<sup>75</sup>.

On the rays of *Obedience*: *Totius aedificii fundamentum, et sanctitatis compendium*<sup>76</sup>.

On the rays of *Poverty*: *Ipsorum est regnum coelorum*<sup>77</sup>. *Divitiae sunt spinae*<sup>78</sup>. *Paupertas non verbis, sed corde et opere conficitur*<sup>79</sup>. *Ipsa coeli ianuam aperiet et introibit*<sup>80</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> Hope in the Lord, not in men.

<sup>68</sup> May your hearts be constantly aimed at where true joy is. This is taken from the collect of the *Missale Romanum* (*Dom. IV* after Easter).

<sup>69</sup> You should carry each other's troubles and fulfil the law of Christ (cf. Gal 6:2).

<sup>70</sup> Love and you will be loved. But love your souls and those of your neighbour.

<sup>71</sup> Devoutly say the Liturgy of the Hours; celebrate Mass attentively; visit the Holy of Holies with much love.

<sup>72</sup> The remedy for concupiscence; powerful weapon against all the devils' snares.

<sup>73</sup> If you remove the wood the fire dies.

<sup>74</sup> Make a pact with your eyes, throat, sleep, so these enemies do not destroy your souls (cf. Job 31:1).

<sup>75</sup> Lack of temperance and chastity do not go together.

<sup>76</sup> Foundations of the building and compendium of holiness.

<sup>77</sup> Theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Mt 5:3).

<sup>78</sup> Riches are the thorns.

<sup>79</sup> Poverty is not lived by words but with the heart and deeds.

<sup>80</sup> It will open the gates of heaven and let you in.

On the rays of *Chastity*: *Omnes virtutes veniunt pariter cum illa*<sup>81</sup>. *Qui mundo sunt corde, Dei arcana vident, et Deum ipsum videbunt*<sup>82</sup>.

On the rays of *Reward*: *Si delectat magnitudo praemiorum, non deterreat multitudo laborum*<sup>83</sup>. *Qui mecum patitur, mecum gaudebit*<sup>84</sup>. *Momentaneum est quod patimur in terra, aeternum est quod delectabit in coelo amicos meos*<sup>85</sup>.

On the rays of *Fasting*: *Arma potentissima adversus insidias inimici*<sup>86</sup>. *Omnium virtutum custos*<sup>87</sup>. *Omne genus daemoniorum per ipsum eicitur*<sup>88</sup>.

A large red-coloured ribbon hemmed the bottom of the cloak, and above this ribbon was inscribed: *Argumentum praedicationis, mane, meridie et vespere*<sup>89</sup>. *Colligite fragmenta virtutum et magnum sanctitatis aedificium vobis constituetis*<sup>90</sup>. *Vae vobis qui modica spernitis, paulatim decidetis*<sup>91</sup>.

Up till this moment some of the Rectors were standing, others kneeling; but all were astonished and no one spoke. At this point Fr Rua spoke excitedly — We need to take notes lest we forget. He looked for a pen but couldn't find one; he pulled out his wallet, searched it but there was no pencil. I will remember, said Fr Durando. I want to take notes, added Fr Fagnano, and began to write with the stem of a rose. We were all looking and we could understand what he was writing. When Fr Fagnano stopped writing, Fr Costamagna continued to dictate: *Charity understands all things, sustains all things, conquers all things; let us preach this in word and deed.*

<sup>81</sup> All virtues come with it (cf. Wis 7:11).

<sup>82</sup> Happy the pure in heart, they shall see God (cf. Mt 5:8).

<sup>83</sup> If you are drawn by the magnificence of the reward, have no fear of effort.

<sup>84</sup> Whoever suffers with me will rejoice.

<sup>85</sup> The troubles which are soon over, though they weigh little, train us for the carrying of a weight of glory which is out of all proportion to them. (cf. 2 Cor 4:17).

<sup>86</sup> Powerful weapon against the snares of the devil.

<sup>87</sup> Guardian of all virtues.

<sup>88</sup> All kinds of temptations can be got rid of with this (cf. Mt 17:20).

<sup>89</sup> Topic for preaching morning, noon and evening.

<sup>90</sup> See to the details of virtues and you will build a grand edifice of holiness.

<sup>91</sup> He who despises trifles will sink down little by little (cf. Sir. 19:1).

While Fr Fagnano was writing, we all found ourselves in pitch dark. “Quiet,” said Fr Ghivarello, “let us kneel down and pray and the light will return.” Fr Lasagna began the *Veni Creator*, then the *De Profundis*, *Maria Auxilium Christianorum* etc. to which we responded. When we said *Ora pro nobis*, a light reappeared, surrounding a placard on which we could read: *Pia Salesianorum Societas qualis esse periclitatur anno salutis 1900*<sup>92</sup>.

A moment later the light became brighter so that we could see and recognise one another. In the midst of this brightness the personage we had seen before appeared again but looking distressed like someone on the verge of tears. His mantles had become faded, moth-eaten, in tatters. In place of the diamonds there were gaping holes caused by moths and other insects.

“*Respicite*,” he told us, “*et intelligite*”<sup>93</sup>. I saw that the ten diamonds had become grubs that were hungrily eating up the garment.

Therefore the diamond *Fides* had been replaced by: *somnus et accidia*<sup>94</sup>.

For *Spes* there was *risus et scurrilitas*<sup>95</sup>.

For *Charitas*: *Negligentia in divinis perficiendis*<sup>96</sup>. *Amant et quaerunt quae sua sunt, non quae Iesu Christi*<sup>97</sup>.

For *Temperantia*: *Gula et quorum Deus venter est*<sup>98</sup>.

For *Labor*: *Somnus, furtum et otiositas*<sup>99</sup>.

*In place of Obedientia* there was nothing but a large, deep hole and nothing written.

For *Castitas*: *Concupiscentia oculorum et superbia vitae*<sup>100</sup>.

<sup>92</sup> The pious Salesian Society as it risks being in 1900.

<sup>93</sup> Look and learn.

<sup>94</sup> Sleep and sloth.

<sup>95</sup> Laughter and scurrilous words.

<sup>96</sup> Negligence in sacred celebrations.

<sup>97</sup> All the rest seem more interested in themselves than in Jesus Christ (Phil 2:21).

<sup>98</sup> Greed; they make foods into their god (Phil 3:19).

<sup>99</sup> Sleep, theft, idleness.

<sup>100</sup> Concupiscentia of the eyes and pride of life (1 Jn 2:16).

For *Poverty* there was: *Lectum, habitus, potus et pecunia*<sup>101</sup>.

For *Praemium*: *Pars nostra erunt quae sunt super terram*<sup>102</sup>.

For *Ieiunium* there was a hole but nothing written.

We were all terrified at the sight. Fr Lasagna fainted, Fr Cagliero went as white as a sheet and leaning against a chair cried out: “Is it possible that things have come to this?” Fr Lazzerio and Fr Guidazio were holding onto each other to stop from falling. Fr Francesia, Count Cays, Fr Barberis and Fr Leveratto were kneeling, rosaries in hand and praying.

Then we heard a sombre voice: “*Quomodo mutatus est color optimus*<sup>103</sup>.”

But in the darkness something remarkable occurred. We suddenly found ourselves enveloped in darkness, in the midst of which appeared a bright light in human form. We could not look at it, but we could see that it was a handsome young man dressed in a white cloak woven through with gold and silver thread. It was hemmed all around with very bright diamonds. He was of imposing and charming mien and he came towards us and addressed us with these exact words:

*“Servi et instrumenta Dei Omnipotentis, attendite et intelligite. Confortamini et estote robusti. Quod vidistis et audistis est coelestis admonitio quae nunc vobis et fratribus vestris facta est; animadvertite et intelligite sermonem. Iacula praevisa minus feriunt, et praeveniri possunt. Quot sunt verba signata, tot sint argumenta praedicationis. Indesinenter praedicate opportune et importune. Sed quae praedicatis, constanter facite, adeo ut opera vestra sint velut lux quae sicuti tuta traditio ad fratres et filios vestros pertranseat de generatione in generationem. Attendite et intelligite: – Estote oculati in tironibus acceptandis; fortes in colendis; prudentes in admittendis. Omnes probate; sed tantum quod bonum est tenete. Leves et mobiles dimittite. Attendite et intelligite: – Meditatio matutina et vespertina sit indesinenter de observantia Constitutionum. Si id feceritis numquam vobis deficiet Omnipotentis auxilium. Spectaculum facti eritis mundo et angelis et tunc gloria vestra erit gloria Dei. Qui videbunt saeculum hoc exiens et alterum*

<sup>101</sup> Rest, clothing, drink and money.

<sup>102</sup> Our earnings are earthly goods.

<sup>103</sup> Oh how the old gold has tarnished (Lam 4:1).



*incipiens, ipsi dicent de vobis: – A Domino factum est istud et est mirabile in oculis nostris. Tunc omnes fratres vestri et filii vestri una voce cantabunt: – Non nobis, Domine, non nobis; sed nomini tuo da gloriam*<sup>104</sup>.

These last words were sung, and to the voice of the one speaking were added a multitude of other voices so melodious and resonant that we were left benumbed, and to prevent ourselves from swooning, we joined in the singing. As soon as the singing finished it all went dark. Then I awoke, and I am telling you that it was daylight.

*Reminder* – This dream lasted almost the entire night and in the morning I was completely worn out. Nevertheless for fear of forgetting I got up quickly and took some notes that served to remind me of what I have spoken of on this day of the presentation of Mary in the Temple.

It was not possible to recall everything. Amongst many other things I could detect with certainty that the Lord shows us great mercy. Our Society is blessed by Heaven, but he wants us to do our part. The threatened evils will be prevented if we preach on the virtues and vices noted there: if we practise what we preach, we shall be able to hand on to our confreres a practical tradition of what we have done and shall do.

I was able to see that there are many thorns imminent, many efforts, but they will be followed by many great consolations. Around 1890 there will be great fear; around 1895 there will be a great triumph. *Maria Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis.*

<sup>104</sup> Servants and instrument of almighty God, listen and understand. Have courage and be strong. What you have seen and heard is a warning from heaven, sent to you and your brothers now. Pay attention and understand well what it is saying to you. Blows that are foreseen do less damage and can be prevented. The words indicated are topics for preaching. Preach tirelessly, in season and out of season. But practise what you preach, so that your works are like light which, radiating in the form of safe tradition, shines on your brothers and sons from generation to generation. Listen well and understand: — Be careful in accepting novices, strong in cultivating them, prudent in admitting them [to profession]. Test them all but keep only the best. Send the light and fickle ones away. Listen well and understand: — Meditation morning and evening should constantly be on observance of the Constitutions. If you do this the help of the Almighty will never be lacking. You will be a spectacle for the world and the angels and then your glory will be the glory of God. Those who see the end of this century and the beginning of the next will tell you: — this is the work of the Lord and it is admirable in our eyes. Then all your brothers and sons will sing: “Not to us O Lord, not to us, but to your name be glory.”