

WHAT IS A SALESIAN PARISH?

In an effort to explain what makes a parish Salesian, it is helpful to understand something about Don Bosco, founder of the Salesian Congregation, and his spirituality.

DON BOSCO'S PREVENTIVE SYSTEM : A SPIRITUALITY

Don Bosco's spirituality affected his whole person and all that he did. His work for the salvation of souls took in a youngster's whole life and not only the spiritual aspect. Don Bosco had a holistic view of the person.

For Don Bosco, "salvation" was not limited to a concern for the religious aspect of a person; it did not mean only freedom from sin and growth in Christ. Don Bosco was aware that a humanly depressing situation of poverty and abandonment can be a serious risk for a person's eternal salvation. As a result of his contacts with delinquent youth in prisons and with boys who roamed the streets of Turin, he realized that if he wanted to lead them to the Lord, catechism would require personal relationships too, and religious instruction would have to go hand in hand with preparation in a school or workshop for the life in society.

His zeal for souls (or what we call "pastoral charity") led him to launch out into every kind of initiative that he thought necessary for the total development of youth. Behind it all was an integral concept of the child: an individual destined for heaven but entrusted with a mission on earth, someone anchored in God and a future citizen of heaven but also solidly established in the society of human beings as a citizen of the earthly city.

This is why, on the one hand, he sought to impart a good education, a sense of duty, a training for a profession, and a preparation for insertion in society - all contents of what he called "**REASON**"; and on the other hand, he instilled morality, AN UPRIGHT conscience, faith, an understanding of the truths of Christianity, religious practices, and an involvement in the life of the Church - elements that made up what he termed "**RELIGION**".

There was also a third crucial element: the method of **LOVING-KINDNESS**. Don Bosco was convinced that there was very little he would be able to achieve with youth if he could not win their love and confidence. In one of his "good nights" to his boys, after telling them

that he was there for only one purpose: to help them in the salvation of their souls, he went on to say, "We must be of one mind in this, and real confidence and friendship must unite us".

And so, these three pillars or foundations of the Preventive System - Reason, Religion and Loving-Kindness - have their source and inspiration in pastoral charity. And as such, they become for the educator a path to achieve his own holiness. No wonder the Preventive System can rightfully boast of having made saints of both the educator Don Bosco and his pupil Dominic Savio: it is more than a method of education; it is fundamentally a spirituality!¹

SO WHAT IS A SALESIAN PARISH?

Don Bosco's charism, rooted in love and expressed through the Preventive System at the service of the young and the poor is his legacy that remains alive in Salesian hearts today. It is this spirituality that becomes the pastoral style of every Salesian work including the parish.

Closer to home, this Salesian spirituality defines who we are called to be here at St. Benedict parish since, in 1983, the Bishop entrusted to the Salesians the pastoral care of this parish community.

As members of the Salesian family, we share with the religious priests, brothers, and sisters the mission to witness to, nurture and develop the Salesian spirituality that is ours.

We do this best when we do our part as individuals and as a community to encourage a spirit of joy and optimism, to recognize and promote the value of the family, to support education in our faith at all stages of life, to participate in the sacramental life of the church and to be sensitive to the needs of the young, the poor and the vulnerable.

Simply put, a Salesian parish is a home that welcomes, a community that evangelizes, a school that prepares for life and a playground where friends could meet and enjoy themselves.

¹ Manual for the Formation of Salesian Lay Collaborators- Salesians of Don Bosco, 1994 - Sections 5.4 - 5.6