

Message of the Salesian Youth Movement from Panama

Dear young people of the world,

we, the young people of the Salesian Youth Movement (SYM) gathered in Panama on the occasion of the 34th World Youth Day, would like to share with you the blessings we received in these special days, while encouraging you in your journey, at the personal level and as SYM.

We had the opportunity to meet in the World SYM Forum in the Basilica of St. John Bosco in Panama, on Wednesday 23rd of January 2019. We shared our experiences in groups, we received the answers of the Rector Major and the Mother General to our questions, and celebrated together the Eucharist. We then joined thousands of friends in the World SYM Feast, where we celebrated the joy of our faith according to our Salesian Youth Spirituality.

This message is the fruit of our reflections, prayers and sharing on this special occasion. May these words communicate to you our friendship and proximity.

Youth is a gift. It is a precious time of our lives when we can discover who we are, our talents and gifts, our weaknesses and struggles; as well as to discern our vocation, be it religious or lay. We all have a mission for our lives. Individually, each one of us has a journey, but it's journeying together that allows us to be part of the ultimate mission, the path to Christ. Jesus was young too, and it is the young Jesus we journey with.

We are often told that we are the future of society, the future of the Church. We know, however, that we are already part of the Church and the society, today. We have to speak up, if we really want our voice to be heard; but we need a solid formation so that our voices do not only follow what is popular and trendy. In many contexts, today, the institutional dimension of the Church is a cross for young people to bear. It is time to join hands in solidarity and ensure young people's voice is heard across the Church and across society. We can be the Church that walk "with" the young and not only "for" the young. How fulfilling is the experience when young people are heard, listened to, loved and accompanied! May SYM be a home, a family, a place where the voice of the Spirit and the voice of young people are listened to.

Don Bosco once said that true religion is not just words, you have to put words into actions. The most important thing is to get to know Jesus and allow Him to be a part of our lives. SYM is not a hobby, a time for entertainment. It requires a real commitment. It demands to go out of our comfort zones, to go out in the streets, to serve those in need, to reach out to peripheries. Such a commitment, furthermore, needs to be lived and shared in a community. We are aware that we can shape the world we live in. Therefore, integral ecology, as presented by Pope Francis in his letter *Laudato Si*, should be part of our formation processes. Integral ecology is also about just and mutual relationships between man and woman, acknowledging equal rights and opportunities, especially in education, and working together. Sometimes we wonder: what is our social responsibility as SYM? Are we living the social dimension of our faith?

In order to live and to answer all this, indeed, we need more formation and accompaniment. Let us seek and demand more opportunities to be formed alongside our Salesian brothers and sisters. May our formation in SYM be centered on Christ, as Salesian Youth Spirituality

demands. We need Don Bosco, we need Jesus. Let us take our time, without any pressure, so as to pray, meditate and adore God, while at the same time discern our vocation and mission. Only out of this we can feel the joy that God puts deep in our hearts. True joy is more than happiness!

Indeed, joy is not simply happiness, but an undercurrent in our life. Happiness is a fleeting feeling, but joy is endless. Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello lived with joy. They entrusted all to Mary and she guided it all. Joy cuts through oppression, sadness, anger. May this deeper joy relieve the hearts of the young people of those countries who are living a difficult time of their history: Venezuela, Nicaragua, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Korea, Syria and many others. We want to express to young people who are suffering our solidarity and ensure our prayers.

Today's challenges require strong young people ready to face them. Let us commit ourselves, as SYM, to form young people willing to follow their dreams, to stand up for others, to change the world starting from their local context and their daily life, following Christ in the spirit of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello. There is a promising Word waiting for each one of us. Let us all say with faith: "May it be done to me according to your word".

Panama, Sunday 27th of January 2019
XXXIV World Youth Day