

Our YOUNG PEOPLE as YEAST in today's human family
The Rector Major's message to young people of the Salesian Youth Movement

Dear young people from all over the Salesian world,

As Rector Major, on behalf of Don Bosco and the entire Salesian Family, I would like to send you a greeting and a few words on his feast day.

It is our wish to continue to walk together on life's journey, as you asked us when you were with us at the 28th General Chapter of the Salesians. It was there that you told us: "We want to tell you loudly, with all our heart. Being here was a dream come true for us: in this special place that is Valdocco, where the Salesian mission began, Salesians and young people together for the Salesian mission, with our common desire to be saints together. You have our hearts in your hands. Take care of this precious treasure of yours. Please, never forget us and keep listening to us."¹

Dear young people, I have always been moved by your request to be saints, together, inviting us to take care of you and the precious treasure of your young hearts, of all of you who desire to be authentic, supportive, fraternal and true believers, women and men of deep faith in the Lord of Life.

Dear young people, you are called to a great mission!

The last three Popes – John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis – have given you much thought and have presented you with courageous and strong challenges. These are very relevant challenges, very timely and – may I say – very "Salesian".

Therefore, a challenging mission has been put before you in Jesus' name: to be active in your social commitment, as true yeast in the human family.

- You have before you the great challenge of continuing to accept responsibility for the gift of life, of all human life. Serving the "culture of life" will always be an attractive and challenging task for each of you.
- The promotion of family values and the commitment to eradicate the poverty that forces many people to live on the margins, as well as the fight against hunger, are issues that often do not leave you unmoved as young people.
- It is good that some of you are working to defend human rights and children's rights. Not to mention the great challenge of building peace. The efforts we make in the search for peace are never enough.
- You are also very sensitive to the good use of the earth's resources, to the care of Creation, respecting everything that has to do with a correct ecology.

To you who read this *Message* throughout the world, in thousands of Salesian houses sharing the same faith, I say: encourage genuine dialogue among yourselves. The other person, your companion, the one who is different in culture

¹SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO, *What kind of Salesian for the youth of today? Post-Chapter reflection*, Editrice S.D.B., Rome 2020, 146.

and religion, is always a young person like you, someone you can meet and converse with, and even become friends with. Differences, in fact, cannot be seen as an obstacle, but must become an opportunity for mutual enrichment.

Dear young people, all these challenges and many others concern the human family today. And today we want to be yeast, salt, light for this world.

These challenges demand that you express a “yes” through your life, formation, studies, your work and your vocation, a “yes” that demonstrates in practice your commitment to building a more just and fraternal world.

These challenges place you at the crossroads of accepting or rejecting a busy and exciting life in which to focus all your best forces and energies according to God’s dream for each of you.

Certainly you are not asked for particular or extraordinary heroism, but only – and this is already a lot – to bring to fruition the gifts and talents that God has granted to each of you, committing yourselves to grow in faith, in true love, in fraternity and in service on everyone’s behalf, especially service of the least, those most affected by life, those who have the least opportunities.

This seems to me to be a formidable proposal for every young Christian and Salesian who wants to be a missionary disciple of the Lord today, and for every young person of other religious faiths who is in Don Bosco’s houses.

Let me conclude by thanking the Lord for so many expressions of beauty, fullness and goodness in your life, dear young people, that leads you to think of other boys, girls, other young men and women like yourselves but who are lost, disoriented and very far from the values that give them dignity.

Our God, who is the Father of all his sons and daughters, needs you and asks you to be his face and hands to reach those who have less possibilities.

I encourage you in this commitment and I sincerely wish you a happy feast of Don Bosco!

With true affection,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ángel Fernández Artime". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'A'.

Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, SDB
Rector Major

Valdocco, Turin, 31 January 2023