



SALESIAN SPIRIT

Fr. Pathiaraj Rayappan SDB

Another characteristic of the Salesian spirit is the habitual optimism and joy. The Salesian is optimistic: he does not allow anything to upset him. This optimism is born out of deep trust in God, human beings, one's own self, and the world. The Salesian is optimistic because...

He has complete trust in God's care

He believes in man's natural and supernatural resources

He does not lose sight of his own weakness

He believes that there is good in the world

He does not bewail his own times and situations

He accepts whatever is good in the world especially if it appeals to the young

And the Salesian is cheerful and radiates joy. The Salesian educates youngsters to a Christian and festive way of life: "Let us serve the Lord in holy joy"



THE SALESIAN

1. Optimism: Courageous trust

The Salesian is optimistic: he has courageous trust in God. In our apostolic works, we face difficulties of various sorts. In such situations, we need to courageously trust in God: God is our Father who loves us; He will never fail us. Since the Salesian has unshakable faith in God's care, he remains habitually calm.

Don Bosco inculcated such trust in God by his word as well as example. His biographers describe him as remaining habitually calm even in the midst of troubles. When surmounted by difficulties, Don Bosco would cheerfully say, "God is a good Father. He provides for the birds of the air; most surely He will provide for us too. ... God started these projects; I am but His instrument. As such I do not have to worry about supplying the means to further and bring them to a successful end. God will take care of that when and as

He shall see fit. My task is just to be docile and pliable in His hands." Once when Fr. Louis Lasagna expressed concerns about the survival of the Congregation after the death of its founder, Don Bosco replied, "You rely too heavily on human factors. We must rather put our trust in the supernatural. Look, either Don Bosco is powerless or he can do something. In the latter case, he will undoubtedly help you even after his death, but if he is powerless, then so much the better. God will take over, and He can do everything!" That was the reason for his optimism!

Don Bosco constantly advised the Salesians and boys not to let anything disturb them. The first thing Don Bosco told Don Rua when appointing him the Director of the house at Mirabello was: Let nothing upset you! This is the lesson given to all Rectors! To a worried boy, Don Bosco would often say, "Take St. Teresa's advice: Let nothing upset you." Whenever

his co-workers felt downhearted because of so many difficulties, Don Bosco would cheer them on and say, "Our trust in God must be greatest when our trials are hardest. ... If this work is Yours, O Lord, then You will sustain it. If it is mine, I don't mind if it fails!"

Trusting in God does not mean that we sit back and do nothing or that we proceed blindly! Don Bosco was not blinded by optimism, nor did he view life through rosy spectacles! He trusted in God but left nothing to chance. He told the Salesians and the boys to do their best while they trusted in God: "As the donkey ambles along, the load adjusts itself." By this he meant that the difficulties are overcome by action! He enlisted the number of things we need to painstakingly consider: "We do not proceed blindly. Even though we have unlimited trust in the will of God and His Divine Providence, before undertaking anything we first thoroughly examine the means available ... such means as we may reasonably expect. ... If we go on, we do so with caution. Besides, we do not sit with folded hands. We send letters, reminders, and appeals here, there, and

"Just as there is no barren or sterile land which cannot be made fertile through patient effort, so it is with a man's heart. No matter how barren and restive at first, it will sooner or later bring forth good fruit. ... Even the most callous boys have a soft spot. The first duty of the educator is to locate that sensitive spot, that responsive chord in the boy's heart, and take advantage of it." And who were the ones whom he invited to found his new congregation, if not his own boys!

3. Optimism: Seeing the good in the world

The Salesian is optimistic: sees the good in the world. The Salesian has a positive view of the world.



OPTIMISM

everywhere. We organise lotteries and other fundraising projects, and leave no stone unturned."

2. Optimism: Trusting others

The Salesian is optimistic: believes in the goodness and capabilities of every youngster. The Salesian is guided by the optimistic humanism of St. Francis de Sales: God has created the human person good! He has put into man's heart natural and supernatural resources in which the educator can always find reasons for hope. And therefore, we do not condemn anyone or give up on anyone!

Don Bosco believed in the boys. He believed that they were capable of great things. He was convinced that the grace of God and human effort could make every adolescent a genuine saint. He even accepted some worldly-minded boys into the Oratory because he believed that they were capable of becoming good:

The Salesian resists the natural tendency of many adults to praise the past and bewail the present, because he is able to seek, discern and accept 'what is good' in today's world and fight strenuously against evil but without bitterness. The Salesian accepts whatever is good in the world especially if it appeals to the young.

CONCLUSION

Salesians should be optimistic, trusting in God and in the capabilities of the youngsters. At the same time, he should have his feet firmly on the ground and take all the efforts to bring to completion all ventures. The Salesian should be cheerful, a cheerfulness born out of being at peace with God, a cheerfulness which is contagious! The cheerful atmosphere is the natural environment for the preventive system of education. ■