



SALESIAN SPIRIT

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Another characteristic of the Salesian spirit is work and temperance. The Salesian should work hard in the Salesian mission of educating the poor youth and working for the salvation of their souls. But the Salesian should not overwork as to endanger his health. He should be temperate also in eating, drinking and sleeping.

TWO INSEPARABLE SALESIAN CONCEPTS

In the Salesian tradition work and temperance are two inseparable concepts. They are always placed together. They were, for Don Bosco, a programme of life, a motto placed alongside 'da mihi animas cetera tolle' and were a guarantee that the congregation would flourish. In a dream, Don Bosco was instructed: "Take heed: you must have these words engraved on your coat-of-arms as your watchword, your badge. Note them well: work and Temperance will make the congregation flourish. Have these words explained repeatedly and insistently. Compile and print a handbook that will clearly explain that work and temperance are the legacy you are bequeathing to the



Following supernatural interventions Don Bosco always spoke of work and temperance together. For example, in writing to Fr. Fagnano in 1877, Don Bosco said, "Always remind all our Salesians of the motto we have adopted, 'work and temperance'. These are the two weapons with which we can overcome everyone and everything."

THE WORK OF THE SALESIAN

"The Salesian gives himself to his own mission with tireless energy, taking care to do everything with simplicity and moderation. He knows that by his work he is participating in the creative action of God and cooperating with Christ in building up the kingdom." (C 18)

Don Bosco wanted his Salesians to be known for their hard work. Don Bosco constantly exhorted his Salesians to work hard. The summary of the dream of 'Candy for the Salesians' according to Don Bosco was that we should practise the gentleness of our own St. Francis de Sales and that we must unceasingly work hard.

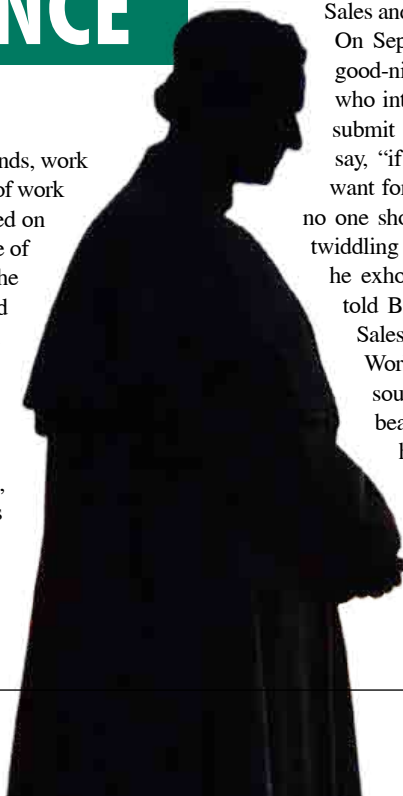
On September 22, 1877 Don Bosco gave a good-night in which he announced that those who intended to join the congregation might submit their application and he went on to say, "if you join the Congregation you will want for nothing, but you must work. ... and no one should enter if he intends to sit around twiddling his thumbs." Even on his deathbed he exhorted the Salesians to work hard! He told Bishop Cagliero, "... Please tell all the Salesians to work zealously and fervently. Work, work! Work unceasingly to save souls." Pope Pius XI on the day of the beatification of Don Bosco remembered him for having said, "anyone who doesn't know how to work is not a Salesian."

Don Bosco was indeed a model of hard work. In 1861 a few young clerics, disturbed by some deaths and being aware of Don

WORK AND TEMPERANCE

congregation and will be also its glory?"

Again, in the dream of the ten diamonds, work and temperance are linked. The diamond of work and the diamond of temperance are placed on the shoulders and they support the mantle of the august personage. It means that in the physiognomy of the Salesian, work and temperance cannot be separated one from the other. In another dream in 1879 a man like St. Francis de Sales appeared and conversed with Don Bosco. Don Bosco asked whether the congregation would have a longlife and he was told, "Yes, but only as long as its members love work and temperance. Should either of these two pillars fall, your entire edifice will collapse and crush superiors, subjects and followers beneath it?"



Bosco's poor health, began to fear for his life and urged him to take care of himself and cut down on his work. In trying to convince him, one of them said, "Wouldn't it be better for you to work less and live perhaps ten years longer, rather than wear yourself out and die prematurely?" "Yes," Don Bosco replied, "but how can you be so sure that by working less I will live ten years longer? As long as I can, I want to use all my energies for God's glory and the salvation of souls. I have no intention of ruining my health. I just intend to do all I can." Although Don Bosco worked hard and exhorted others to work hard, he also asked that a balance be maintained. He used to remark to his young clerics, "There is a limit to what a man can do. Nobody should overwork himself lest he be prematurely worn out and become useless and be done for, just when he ought to be at the peak of his powers." Writing in 1880 to Fr. Bodrato Don Bosco asked him to urge our dear confreres "to work as much as their health will allow while being on guard against idleness."

TYPE OF WORK: OUR MISSION

The Salesian gives himself to 'his mission' with tireless energy. This makes it clear that the Salesian is not to be engaged in any type of work but the Salesian mission, a work linked to the carrying out of the Salesian mission, an activity proper to the Salesian, working for the salvation of souls. Don Bosco says, "He does much who, though doing little, does what he must; he does nothing who does much, but not what he should do." Don Bosco used to encourage the first Salesians when they were tired and weary, saying, "Courage! Let's keep working. In heaven we shall rest forever. Should a Salesian die while working for souls, you may say that our Congregation has scored a great triumph. God's blessings will fall abundantly upon it." Don Bosco said it again in his spiritual testament: "Whenever it may happen that a Salesian succumbs and dies while working for souls, then you will say that our Congregation has gained deservedly a great triumph and the blessings of Heaven will abundantly fall on it!" Hence, primacy of place is to be given to working for souls!

In 1869 on 18th September Don Bosco gave the concluding talk at the retreat at Lanzo exhorting the Salesians to work with faith, hope and charity, which provide the deeper motivations for our ministry: "Work with faith, hope and charity. Work with faith, striving toward the reward awaiting us in heaven. Let us not toil to be praised by our superior or our companions. Let us strive not for such paltry things but only to please the Lord. Let us work with hope. When we are weary or afflicted, let us raise our eyes to heaven. A generous reward awaits us

in this life, and an eternal one at death. Let us be like the hermit who drew comfort from heaven by gazing through slits in his tiny, dingy cave. 'He who trusts in the Lord shall not be put to shame.' (Sir 32: 28) Work with love for God. He alone—the true rewarder of every little thing we do for Him—deserves to be loved and served. He loves us as an affectionate father, for Holy Scripture tells us: 'I have loved you with an everlasting love.' (Jer. 31: 3)"

On October 3rd 1886 at San Benigno Don Bosco receiving the profession of 53 novices spoke to them asking them to be faithful to the education of poor youth: "The Salesians would want for nothing, provided they remained faithful to educating poor youth, since this was the mission entrusted to them by Our Lady." When anyone in the house suggested undertakings outside the scope of our rules, Don Bosco used to reply: "We have our own goals. Let us first do our own work. Other people's projects may be as good as you claim but they are not within our sphere of action, and they divert us from our goals. By God's goodness, we need not copy from others; rather, let others copy from us, if they wish."

In 1879 on 29th April Don Bosco lamented: "We already have too many things to do without going out to look for more work—especially because such commitments interfere with our duties and draw our hearts to certain outside works which boost self-complacency and make us neglect our own tasks. Even in South America our confreres overburden themselves with outside work. True, we aim at God's greater glory, but it is also true that our primary goal is the care of youth, and, consequently, every concern which draws us from that cannot be good. To let a boarding school run down in order to go and hear confessions elsewhere makes no sense."

Constitutions affirm that we are co-workers with God for the coming of the kingdom. The Salesian should not identify himself with his profession (as educator, instructor, administrator, rector) but identifies himself with his vocation, which transforms his activity into witness and



makes of his work a message for the present day.

THE SALESIAN'S TEMPERANCE

Temperance gives him the strength to control his heart, to master himself and remain even-tempered. (C 18)

Our Project of life gives three quotations in which Don Bosco appeals to the Salesians and Salesian sisters to work only as much as their health will permit. He told the Salesian sisters at Alassio in 1879: "As for work, yes, go ahead and work, but don't overdo it. Don't shorten your life by privations or excessive toil or depression or such other nuisances." Similarly, he told the Salesians, "Work as much as your health will allow, but be on your guard against idleness." And he told the departing missionaries,



"Take care of your health, work, but only as much as your strength allows." Don Bosco wants us to work hard but not to overdo it!

Temperance is self-control and the custody of the heart, i.e., moderation of the inclinations and passions, a constant effort to be balanced and reasonable and a break with earthly attractions. Temperance controls everything in accordance with reason. To be temperate means to be controlled, balanced, with common sense, not given to exaggeration, reasonable in behaviour, self-controlled and pleasant in manner.

In a conference to his priests and clerics Don Bosco warned them also to be on guard against every least thing which, though legitimate, might cause scandal to others. He urged them to observe norms of temperance, not to eat or drink between meals, and never to make coffee for themselves in their own rooms. Don Bosco spoke to all his young clerics at the oratory, both postulants and professed, on chastity. One of the several means he enlisted was

temperance in eating and drinking. Eating between meals is plain gluttony, he told them. He asked them to be on their guard against overeating and drinking. On February 6, 1877 Don Bosco spoke of finding ways and means of maintaining high standards of morality in Salesian houses among both pupils and Salesians: "great temperance in the use of meat and wine to whose excessive use he attributed the low morals of certain countries, adding that people who were sparing in the use of meat and avoided spicy or hard-to digest foods were much less susceptible to the promptings of concupiscence. He also pointed out that the Church, in recommending penance, focused first on meat!"

Again, Don Bosco advising the boys on the way to spend the holidays at home, exhorted them to have a good, but moderate, breakfast and lunch. "But make sure you are moderate. You know well that we Piedmonese have some proverbs which are funny but truthful. I won't quote them all, but I'll just mention one or two: 'A stuffed belly is a temptation. Everything in the belly belongs to the devil.' The Fathers of the Church tell us that we live hand in hand with an enemy, and this enemy is our body. Yield to all its demands, and it waxes bold to harm us. Feed it sparingly, and it yields to us, like a horse which is sparingly fed its hay and oats. Tucking its ears back, it obeys its master." During the second retreat in 1879 in Lanzo, Don Bosco spoke on temperance. He referred to the moral harm done by intemperance especially by drinking. He urged his listeners, "Let each of you strive for moderation, eating and drinking only what you need, no more. When you are invited out to dinner, for example, and you must accept because of circumstances, you will find food and drink in abundance. Be pleasant and don't be stand-offish because there will be more than usual on such occasions. Just control yourself, and gauge what you need. No excess, no intemperance! On this point we must be strict with ourselves."

In the dream of Ten Diamonds, on the rays of the diamond of Temperance were the following written: "Remove the fuel and the fire will die out. Make a pact with your eyes, with your cravings, your sleeping, lest these enemies plunder your souls. Self-gratification and chastity cannot co-exist."

CONCLUSION

The asceticism of the Salesian is based on work and temperance. The Salesian does not look for unusual penances but accepts the daily demands and renunciations of the apostolic life. He is ready to suffer cold and heat, hunger and thirst, weariness and disdain whenever God's glory and the salvation of souls require it (C 18).

