



Diocese of Westminster

AGENCY FOR EVANGELISATION
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

'Learn From Me'

Reflecting on the Lives of Saints and Blesseds of Catechesis



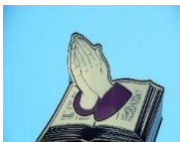
“Do not forget that our work with young people began with a simple catechism lesson.”

St John Bosco: Feast, 31st. January

Opening Prayer

O God, who raised up the Priest Saint John Bosco as a father and teacher of the young, grant, we pray, that, aflame with the same fire of love, we may seek out souls and serve you alone. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

(Collect, Feast Day Mass)



Scripture Reflections Phil 4:4-9

Brothers and sisters:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near.

Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.

Matthew 18:1-5

The disciples approached Jesus and said,

"Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?"

He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said,

"Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me."

- Is there a word or phrase that stands out or remains with you after reading these passages?

Biography

Born: 16 August 1815 at Becchi, Piedmont, Italy as

As a boy, as soon as he was old enough to do odd jobs, John did so to help support his family. Bosco would go to circuses, fairs and carnivals, practice the tricks that he saw magicians perform, and then put on one-boy shows. After his performance, while he still had an audience of boys, he would repeat the homily he had heard earlier that day in church.

Worked as a tailor, baker, shoemaker, and carpenter while attending college and seminary.

Ordained in 1841. A teacher, he worked constantly with young people, finding places where they could meet, play and pray, teaching catechism to orphans and apprentices. His work initially looked to encourage work with children and young people. The main form he adopted was the youth oratory. Later he was to turn his attention to schooling, particularly trade schools. His educational system is often described as the 'preventive system' (see below)

Founded the Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB) in 1859; the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians in 1872, and Union of Cooperator Salesians in 1875.

Died: 31 January 1888 at Turin, Italy of natural causes

Beatified: 2 June 1929 by Pope Pius XI

Canonized: 1 April 1934 by Pope Pius XI

Using St. John Bosco's 'Preventive System'

Overall Aim : to bring the child closer to Christ.

The **Principle of Reason** provides a reasonable atmosphere where the child would be given the opportunity to consent to instruction and guidance. The goal of this first principle is to develop good Christians and useful citizens. The teacher must be the bridge to a child's discovery of the world through patience, diligence, and prayer.

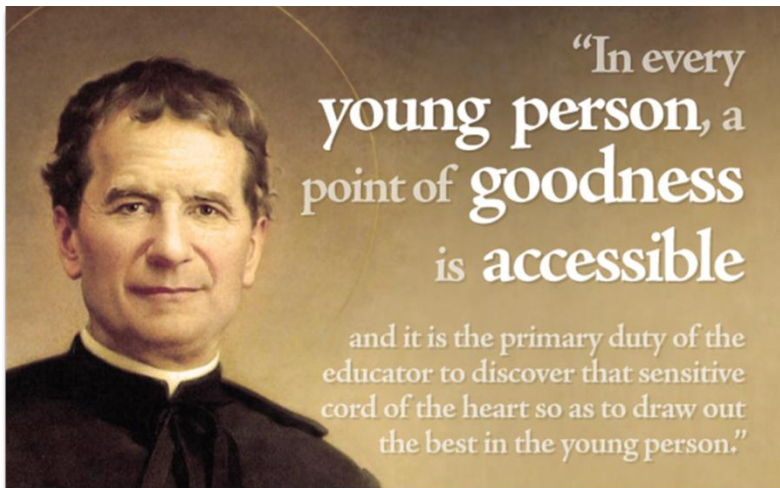
The **Principle of Religion** stressed the ugliness of sin and the value of living a virtuous life. The aim is to develop the intellectual and physical

gifts the child possesses and how he can be directed toward a greater good. There are five steps within this principle to help youth attain personal holiness:

1. Holiness of ordinary life
2. The joy and optimism of holiness
3. Centrality of Confession
4. The Holy Eucharist
5. Love of Mary

The ***Principle of Kindness*** emphasizes the virtue of love. St. John Bosco would stress: "Let us make ourselves loved, and we shall possess their hearts." In other words, our Christian witness must be constant for the development of the child. The learning environment should be warm and inviting, not cold. The family spirit reigned; he did this through rapport, friendliness, presence, respect, attention, dedication to service, and personal responsibility.

The core of all three principles of the Preventive System is to draw the child away from a view that only he exists and no one else. We want the child to know that he is part of God's plan by the very fact he was created in His image and likeness. This in turn will help the child view others in the same light.



Significance for Catechists

For reflection: What does the life of St John Bosco say to us as catechists? What can we learn from him, particularly in our work with young people?

Closing Prayer

St John Bosco, friend of the young,
teacher in the ways of God,
your dedication to empowering the needy inspires us still.

Help us to work for a better world,
where the young are given the chance to flourish,
where the poor's dream for justice can come true,
and where God's compassion is shown to be real.
Help us to become signs and bearers of God's love for the young.
Amen.

'Take Away' : Going Deeper

Videos: *(embedded web links)*

Biography, posted by Sensus Fidelium, Saint Life: Saint John Bosco - the Gentle Shepherd, <https://youtu.be/2hXT3EB02Oo>

Don Bosco Mary's Dowry Productions

St John Bosco, Mission to Love TV drama/DVD, 2004

Don Bosco, Film, (1988) (also uploaded on YouTube Don Bosco uploaded

In the Footsteps of Don Bosco in Rome

Bosco, Don (1884) 'An exhortation to educators', Rome, May 10, 1884.

Available in the informal education archives:

<https://infed.org/mobi/an-exhortation-to-educators/>

Articles

Catechists' Journey – Teaching Skills:

<https://catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2015/01/loving-students-as-st-john-bosco-did/>

Catholic Mom: "If You want to be A Catechist, Listen to St John Bosco",

<https://www.catholicmom.com/articles/2015/02/11/if-you-want-to-be-a-catechist-listen-to-st-john-bosco>

Excerpts From the Spiritual Testament by Saint John Bosco, Priest (Epistolario, Torino 1959, 4, 201-203) Full text available from www.universalis.com for the feast day

Acknowledgements

Illustration of St Johna: from 'Saints of Catechesis' exhibition, II International Catechetical Congress, September 2018, Rome.

Scripture passages: From Memorial of St John Bosco and Common of Pastors, New American Bible translation

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Biographical notes:

Bosco, Don (1884) 'An exhortation to educators', Rome, May 10, 1884. Available in the informal education archives: <https://infed.org/mobi/an-exhortation-to-educators/>

<https://catholicsaints.info/saint-john-bosco/>

Picture quote as appears on <http://www.donboscowest.org/saints/donbosco>

Closing Prayer : (adapted from "Preparing a Personal Plan of Life" Fr. Dennis Donovan, SDB, slide presentation for Salesian Co-operators, <https://slideplayer.com/slide/12030274/>)