



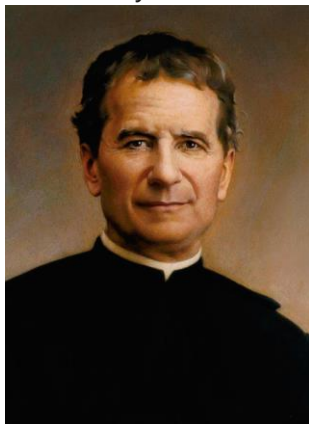
Basilian Fathers

BICENTENNIAL • 2022

ST. JOHN BOSCO

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January 31, 2022



Giovanni Bosco, founder of the Salesian family was born of poor parents at Becchi, a hillside hamlet near Castelnuovo, Piedmont, Italy, August 16, 1815. He was raised in a Catholic family but was too young ever to know his father who died when John was only two years old. John's mother raised four children and taught them the importance of their faith. At the age of four, John began to do small jobs to earn money to support the household.

From his childhood, he had a great desire to become a priest and help young boys who like himself were not afforded all the pleasures in life. He worked hard so he could afford to leave his family and attend school. Eventually John entered the seminary and excelled in his studies and served as a model to other seminarians on how to live a holy life of happiness.

At the age of 26, John was ordained to the priesthood in 1841 and set out to take his message to the world. Known as "Don Bosco", his service to young people started when he met a poor

orphan and instructed him in preparation for receiving Holy Communion. He then gathered young apprentices and taught them catechism. After serving as chaplain in a hospice for working girls, John opened the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales for boys.

His enthusiasm and emphasis on teaching young boys drew ridicule from some of his peers who did not see its value, but John saw the need to train the future of the Church and allow their youthful energy to be put to work for the greater glory of God. The evening classes increased and gradually dormitories were provided for many who desired to live at the Oratory. Municipal authorities by this time had come to recognize the importance of the work which the young priest was doing, and he began with much success a fund for the establishment of technical schools and workshops.

"Mama Margaret", as Don Bosco's mother came to be known, gave the last ten years of her life in devoted service to the young people helped by her son. Sacrificing what small means she had, even to parting with her home and possessions, she brought all the solicitude and love of a mother to these children of the streets.

With the encouragement of Pope Pius IX, John gathered 17 men together into a community and founded the Society of St. Francis de Sales in 1859. This society, known as the Salesians of Don Bosco, has the special charism of education and missionary work, especially aiming at the needs of the young.

John Bosco educated the whole person. For John Bosco, being a Christian was a full-time effort, not a once-a-week, Sunday experience. Don Bosco used to say that in all young people, even the most delinquent, at the centre of their heart there is a receptivity to what is good; educators and parents have a duty to develop it, first to discover it, and draw out that unexpected energy.

John Bosco died January 31, 1888, after spending his whole life working for youth. He educated the whole person. He reached out to children whom no one cared for despite ridicule and insults. He was beatified in 1929 and canonized in 1934. Pope John Paul II declared him 'Father and Teacher of Youth' on the centenary of his death.

May St. John Bosco help us to make a place in our Basilian educational institutions and parish communities especially for young people who are living on the peripheries of society. His feast day is celebrated on January 31.